University of Alberta

Understanding Cree Religious Discourse

by

Clinton Norman Westman ©

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Anthropology

Edmonton, Alberta
Fall, 2008

Library and
Archives Canada

Published Heritage
Branch

395 Wellington Street
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

Bibliothèque et
Archives Canada

Direction du
Patrimoine de l'édition

395, rue Wellington
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

Your file Votre référence
ISBN: 978-0-494-46452-6
Our file Notre référence
ISBN: 978-0-494-46452-6

NOTICE:
The author has granted a non-exclusive license allowing Library and Archives Canada to reproduce, publish, archive, preserve, conserve, communicate to the public by telecommunication or on the Internet, loan, distribute and sell theses worldwide, for commercial or non-commercial purposes, in microform, paper, electronic and/or any other formats.

The author retains copyright ownership and moral rights in this thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's permission.

AVIS:
L'auteur a accordé une licence non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque et Archives Canada de reproduire, publier, archiver, sauvegarder, conserver, transmettre au public par télécommunication ou par l'Internet, prêter, distribuer et vendre des thèses partout dans le monde, à des fins commerciales ou autres, sur support microforme, papier, électronique et/ou autres formats.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur et des droits moraux qui protège cette thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

In compliance with the Canadian Privacy Act some supporting forms may have been removed from this thesis.

While these forms may be included in the document page count, their removal does not represent any loss of content from the thesis.

Conformément à la loi canadienne sur la protection de la vie privée, quelques formulaires secondaires ont été enlevés de cette thèse.

Bien que ces formulaires aient inclus dans la pagination, il n'y aura aucun contenu manquant.

Canada

Diesel and dust
is what we breathe.
This land don't change
and we don't leave.
-Midnight Oil[1]

Rain comes from the hills from time to time;
Light mist appears morning and evening.
I open my book without knowing where to turn,
and find moss all over my desk.
-Li Rhua (1565-1635)

---

[1] James Moginie. 1987. "Warakurna." Recorded on Midnight Oil's album *Diesel and Dust.*

Understanding Cree Religious Discourse

Abstract

Pentecostalism, a relatively new branch of Christianity focused on acquiring God's spiritual gifts as the early church did, is a major movement in Aboriginal communities across the Canadian north. By conducting some 14 months ethnographic fieldwork in northern Alberta (primarily Trout Lake and Peerless Lake), I have begun to study this religion in its social context. Using ethnographic and historical methods, I trace the development of Cree Pentecostalism from sect to majority status. I also assess the function of the Cree language, and attend to the role of discourse in general, in Cree Pentecostal worship. I examine the relationship between Pentecostal conversion and other trends and movements in Cree society, and document the relationship between Pentecostal practice and that of other religious networks. By conducting most of my fieldwork in Trout Lake, a community where census data indicate that Pentecostals are in the majority, I am able to consider Pentecostals as more than a fringe group, while also querying whether or not Pentecostalism actually is the majority religion in the community.

I take a tripartite approach, using the classical cultural-historical approach of Boasian anthropology, combined with the broad scope of relevant data seen in the interpretive turn of Geertz, Turner, and Douglas, as amplified by Hymes, Tedlock and others under the rubric of discourse analysis; thirdly, I open up the intellectual scope of the thesis to emphasize experiences of the spiritual as well as discourses about spiritual ideas – in this way I emphasize the description of cultural and personal transformations,

set firmly within the context of holism and interpretive thick description, as the cutting edge of ethnographic practice.

Using scholarly literature from global Pentecostalism and North American Christianity, including works by Cox, Meyer, Lawless, Titon, Luhrmann, and Harding, I suggest that Pentecostal practice depends on learning a new linguistic register, and overall is strongly dependant on discourse and genre. This opens the door to assessing how Christian practices interact with or translate local culture and meaning systems. In assessing these questions I assess theoretical perspectives developed by Sahlins, Thompson, Dombrowski, Preston, Laugrand, Robbins, Schieffelin, Goulet, Philips Valentine, and others.

In memory of Juan Villalta
and
In memory of William Houle

Acknowledgements

I wish to thank those without whom my writing this thesis would have been impossible.

My research was enabled by financial support from the University of Alberta (Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research; Department of Anthropology; Faculty of Arts), the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC), the Canadian Circumpolar Institute, the Jacobs Research Fund, the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC), the European Science Foundation, and the Graduate Students' Association of the University of Alberta. My thanks to these donors, and also to the scholars who assisted me in obtaining funding by writing support letters.

To the political, ritual, and church leaders mentioned herein, who permitted my research, my thanks and respect.

Nitotemak: Peter, Donna, Doreen, Joseph, Dolly, Ray, Janet, William Houle, William S. Houle, William Letendre, Roger, Heebs, Terri, Jake, Lillian, Pearl, John Jim, Ray G., Rodney, my thanks for your friendship. Thanks to Sue in Edmonton for the parking!

Numerous holders of documents allowed me to access their collections and in some cases assisted me in understanding their contents. To Bruce Hirsche, Neil Reddekopp, Trish Bartko, Chuck Humphrey, Paul Hernou, Joseph Cardinal, John A. Cardinal, Rhonda Laboucan, my thanks. I would also like to thank the archivists who assisted me in accessing more open collections: I'll be seeing you.

To my Cree teachers, Dorothy Thunder, Marjorie Memnook, and Hilda Cardinal: my thanks for opening my ears and my mind to the Cree language. To the other translators mentioned herein, thanks for helping me to access this rich data. To Joseph Cardinal, thank you for believing in me, for sharing your knowledge with me, and for reading a chapter. Thanks to Marjorie for reviewing portions of this document, providing comments on it and answers to my questions.

To the members of my committee, my thanks for your guidance and support.

To Andie Palmer, thank you for inviting me to work with you and for teaching me to be a writer and researcher of culture. Anyone who knows Andie's work will see her influence here.

To Laura, you made this possible.

To my sons, Thomas and Miles, you have brightened this work.

To the children of the communities I've worked in, may you grow up in healed communities.

Ay Ay

Table of Contents

Chapter One: Coming back to northern Alberta	**2**
Research questions, thesis plan, and findings	13
Academic approaches to Aboriginal Pentecostalism	19
Community context	32
Preparations and permissions	44
The work of anthropology	61
Chapter Two: Cree language and Pentecostal discourse	**73**
The Cree language	74
English and the bilingual speech event	85
Religious registers	95
Translating Cree Pentecostal discourse	105
Chapter Three: Missionary relations and regional history	**110**
Fin de siecle: encounters	113
Church and state in the early 20th century	121
Ambulatory missions	129
Resident missionaries and community consolidation	141
The advent of Pentecostalism	163
Consolidation of Pentecostalism?	173
Chapter Four: Traditional Cree spirituality in today's communities	**181**
The religion that is not a religion	183
"No one knows the real name or word for Manito"	187
Experiencing places spiritually	195
The local practice and history of Cree ceremonialism	206
kayâs ayisiyiniwak ('long ago people')	211
"Have a sandwich!"	218
"Manito is the god of Abraham!"	224
Spiritual warfare	232
Chapter Five: Translating conversions	**243**
A statistical contribution to understanding conversion	248
Personal accounts of conversion	258
Linking conversion to discourse and interpretation	271
Chapter Six: Faith in God's Temple	**280**
The Pastorate	281
Setting	285
Congregational demographics	290
How to praise the Lord in Cree	299
A mighty Man of God	317
Conclusion: "Farther Along"	**323**
Bibliography	333
Archives Consulted	354

List of Tables

Table One: Religious Affiliation in Selected Communities 253

List of Figures

Figure One: Bigstone Cree Nation Map 1
Figure Two: Trout Lake 32
Figure Three: The Trout River at Trout Lake Proper 49
Figure Four: Jake Skinning Beaver, Trout Lake 64
Figure Five: *kiwetinohk* 80
Figure Six: Hands Raised 101
Figure Seven: Mission Truck Breakdown 110
Figure Eight: Trout Post 116
Figure Nine: "*O-see-mee-mawe*" and his Family, 1939 117
Figure 10: Father Petour 127
Figure 11: Chapel House 136
Figure 12: Chapel House Interior 136
Figure 13: Children of Pierre "Napesis" Okemow at Wabasca 137
Figure 14: Vandersteene's Teepee Altar 141
Figure 15: Sister Victoria and her Students 142
Figure 16: Trout Lake, Years Ago 179
Figure 17: Old Post (Trout Lake), 1938-39 180
Figure 18: Bush/Community 195
Figure 19: Reciprocity 199
Figure 20: Elders Visiting Trout Lake 202
Figure 21: John Jim Houle Drying Rat Root at Mariah Lake 210
Figure 22: Gifts from the Creator 242
Figure 23: On the Trapline 261
Figure 24: Jesus Loves You 281
Figure 25: Johnny and Roger Noskiye at their Smokehouse 284
Figure 26: Emile Houle 302
Figure 27: An Anointing 307
Figure 28: Community Camp near Trout Lake, August, 2006 331
Figure 29: Community Camp near Peerless Lake, August, 2006 332

Transcription Guide

,	hesitation
..	shorter pause
…	longer pause
[ ]	interjection
( )	editorial comment
CAPS	shouting
Italics	emphasis

Note that when transcribing interviews involving translators, I have translated the remarks of the translator, not the original Cree. Furthermore, I have not attempted to edit the translator out of the transcript. As a result, in many transcripts the subject of the interview is referred to in the third person, as in "He said."

List of Abbreviations

AB	Alberta
AGM	Archdiocese of Grouard-McLennan (Roman Catholic body)
BCN	Bigstone Cree Nation
CMA	Christian Missionary Alliance (Evangelical denomination)
CMS	Church Missionary Society (Anglican society)
HBC	Hudson's Bay Company
INAC	Indian and Northern Affairs Canada
LRRCN	Little Red River Cree Nation
MD	Municipal District
NCEM	Northern Canada Evangelical Mission (Evangelical network)
OMI	Oblates of Mary Immaculate (Roman Catholic order)
PAOC	Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada (Pentecostal denomination)
RCC	Roman Catholic Church
SHGSR	Société historique et généalogique de Smoky River
SSHRC	Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council
U of A	University of Alberta
WCFN	Woodland Cree First Nation

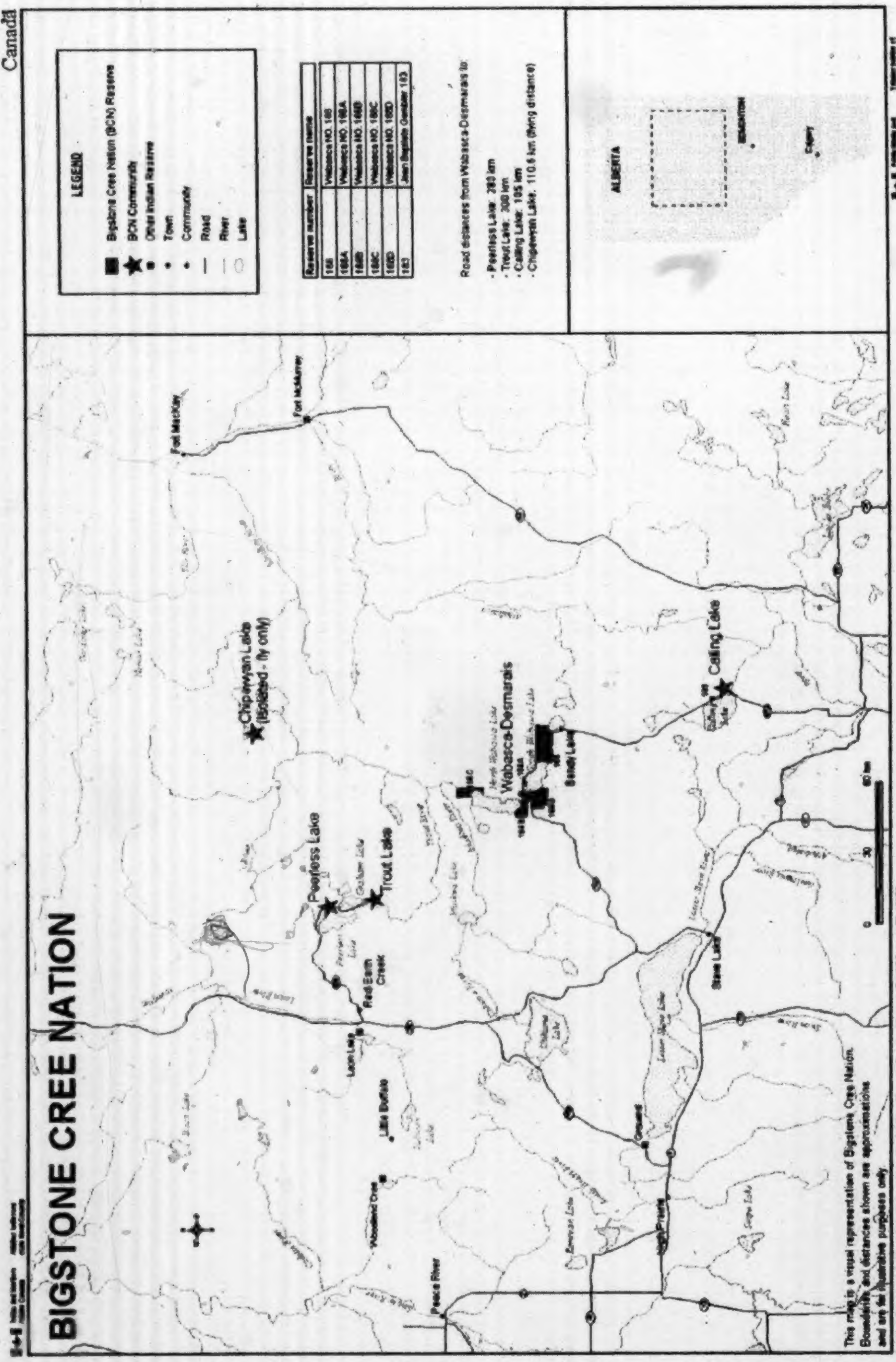

BIGSTONE CREE NATION
Canada
LEGEND
Chipewyan Lake (Isolated - fly only)
Peerless Lake
Trout Lake
Wabasca-Desmarais
Calling Lake
Red Earth Creek
Fort McMurray
Fort MacKay
Peace River
Slave Lake
ALBERTA

Figure One: Bigstone Cree Nation Map (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada [INAC]. 2000[1])

---

[1] INAC. Geoportal. Bigstone Cree Nation. http://geoportail-geoportal.ainc-inac.gc.ca/mp-prd/lnd-02_e.html. Accessed February 29, 2008.

Chapter One: Coming back to northern Alberta

The title of this thesis, *Understanding Cree Religious Discourse*, has multiple meanings. It may be read in a relatively straightforward academic manner, generally referring to the interpretation and analysis of speech to and about gods or spirits, among the Cree Indians, Aboriginal people of Canada. I would not wish to distance myself too far from this potential reading; however, one should also consider alternative readings. Each term in the title, if analyzed, can be found to generate research questions. If this title were translated into Cree, the most likely translations (involving the term '*ayamihâ*') would strongly imply that one was mainly interested in understanding Christianity, specifically how the Cree pray in church, with a linkage to their use of religious texts; this is also a meaning that I am trying to reflect in the thesis' title. Since the English word, 'religion' (referring potentially to many traditions), has no equivalent in Cree, the analyst must choose whether to focus rhetorically on Christianity or Traditional Cree Spirituality ('*kâkesimowin*'). One might add that the word "Cree" refers to wide range of different people, speaking different languages, adhering to different traditions, and believing quite different things, even prior to their encounter with Christianity. Furthermore, attention to discourse (or simply 'talk') must also take account of silence, genre, movement, music, media, tongues of fire, manifestations of spirits and the dead, as well as politics on the local to international scales. Finally, on the subject of understanding, one is facing obstacles in the form of language processes, historical and scholarly lacunae, and phenomenological problems, including inevitable questions about the analyst's religious opinions and experiences. This thesis tells what I have learned through ethnographic research about Cree Pentecostals, their speech, beliefs, practices, and social, historical, and linguistic context.

My first foray into northern research was two months of fieldwork on community forestry in the semi-isolated Cree-Métis community of Cadotte Lake, Alberta ('Woodland Cree Indian Reserve' on the map in Figure One), in spring-summer, 1996. During this fieldwork, I was struck by two social facts, which continue to shape my research interests: 1) the obvious salience of spoken Cree in constituting local culture; 2) the importance of Pentecostalism as the pre-eminent regional religious movement. While visiting the home of one of the young people I became friends with during 1996 fieldwork, I found a religious tract which appeared to target the Roman Catholic Church (RCC), exhorting the reader to "pray for these poor deluded Catholics." I learned that this tract was the property of my friend's brother, who was "religious." When I asked if the brother was Catholic (at the time, I thought that Cadotte only had a Catholic congregation, which held intermittent services in an old log church by the lake), my friend replied: "Nope. *Christian*." This was my first hearing (in the north; I had heard it before in childhood) of the term "Christian" used in its strategically exclusionary sense, which does not (in the speech of some locals) apply to Catholics or others who have not experienced conversion to Pentecostalism. Because of this exclusive context, I generally avoid use of the term Christian in this manner, although I will use it for the next pages to bridge to my preferred term: *Pentecostal*.

Cadotte Lake, and the other communities where I conducted research, are considered together as "the isolated communities," located in the boreal forest of northern Alberta. When I refer to the "isolated communities" (Wetherell and Kmet

2000:5), I am referring to eight communities located north of Lesser Slave Lake, between the Peace and Athabasca rivers. They are as follows: Cadotte Lake, Little Buffalo Lake/Lubicon Lake, Loon Lake ('Loon River'), Peerless Lake, Trout Lake, Chipewyan Lake, Sandy Lake, and Calling Lake. Although known to be inhabited, these locales were not visited by the Indian Treaty and Métis Scrip parties, which were resolving Aboriginal title and benefits in the territory from 1899 to 1901. As a result, the history of the isolated communities is quite different from that of other northern Alberta Aboriginal communities. Allocation of Indian land and status was denied, revoked, delayed, and truncated by the state in various ways that continue to the present and vary by community. Additionally, a substantial number of people in the isolated communities did not attend residential school during the period when many other northern Alberta Aboriginal children were induced to do so. Although they were and are represented by different Indian Bands or Metis locals, most of these communities worked together in the 1970s through a land claims forum called the Isolated Communities Advisory Board (ICAB); this may be the source of the term "isolated communities." Some people in the region also refer to the communities as the "back lakes" (that is, back from Wabasca, Whitefish, and Lesser Slave lakes). As befits these terms, the pace of life is slower here.

Having introduced the setting, I will now define more closely the region's Christians and their doctrinal genealogy, before laying out in greater detail my research questions for this thesis. The people among whom I have conducted fieldwork are not homogenously linked in one denomination. To the extent that they attend worship services regularly, such services may be held in tents, homes, log buildings, or the regular meeting places of independent congregations. While they may seem to constitute a pre-eminently local, or even ethnic, network, yet these Christians are linked to a movement of other Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Christians across Canada and internationally. Throughout this thesis, I generally refer to these Christians as Pentecostals, although most are not formally linked to any Pentecostal denomination. Local usage of this term is inconsistent; however many Cree Christians use it to describe themselves. Furthermore, their practices and doctrines generally reflect Pentecostal insights into Christianity, moreso than other general analytical categories that have been applied by researchers (and which may be accurate in specific contexts), such as Evangelicals, Fundamentalists, factions, or sects. I call Cree Christians "Pentecostals" because I prefer not to use their term "Christian" with its exclusive implications, or to use another potentially divisive or overly complex term such as "Neo-Pentecostal." Above all, I use the term Pentecostal because the churches I attended observe Pentecostal-inspired discursive practices, such as speaking in tongues, prophesying, and seeking healing through faith.

It is necessary here to briefly explain the history and most relevant characteristics of Pentecostalism before developing my specific topic. "Pentecostal" refers to the spiritual gifts gained by Jesus' followers, on the Day of Pentecost.[2] These gifts to the early church, described in the biblical book, Acts of the Apostles, included the ability to speak in new languages, to interpret, and to prophesy. These discursive gifts were strongly associated with ecstasy, so that some onlookers felt that the recipients were drunk on new wine. The gifts, or *charisma*, described in Acts enabled people filled with

---

[2] In the paragraphs that follow, I will offer a summary of Pentecostalism and its relationships with other religions in Canada and internationally, based mainly on my reading of the following sources, to which I now refer the interested reader: Balmer 2006, Bauman 1983, Cox 1994, Lawless 1988, Miller 1994, Morsch 1983, Reynolds 1981, Robbins 2004a, Shoaps 2002, Swatos 2005, Synan 1997, Thompson 1982.

God's authority to become effective, powerful missionaries and agents for God. As Christianity changed, institutionalized, and diversified, revivals of the ecstatic and miraculous power of the early church have been sought periodically. The most relevant stream of such revivals is associated with Methodism, a 'non-conformist' branch of Protestantism, which was popular in Britain and North America during the 18th and 19th centuries. In an increasingly formalized process, Methodists and other seekers of 'Holiness' tried to not only convert, but to *sanctify* themselves, through secondary and subsequent conversion-style processes involving new levels of experience and knowledge.

As a stream of thought, Methodism was very influential in the English-speaking world (including Upper Canada), generating consequent missionary efforts among North American Natives (including the first documented missions to Alberta Aboriginals, during the 1840s), and precipitating a major series of revivals in the USA, especially following that country's Civil War. By the late 19th century, Methodist institutions had become more conservative and establishment-oriented, de-emphasizing their previously mentioned Aboriginal mission in Alberta, for example. In Canada, Methodists went on to form the United Church of Canada, today a large, liberal denomination. Even so, one other result of the revivals initially associated with Methodism was the establishment in Canada and the USA of different institutional frameworks for new kinds of Christianity. Several new Evangelical (conversion/sanctification-oriented) congregations were founded during the late 19th century, including the Christian Missionary Alliance (CMA) church. These churches stressed anew the need to spread the word of God so that all might be saved on the Day of Judgment.

Another result of the Evangelical awakening was the more informal proliferation of new, charismatic, demonstrations of God's spiritual gifts, outside of denominations such as the CMA. Around 1900, practices at powerful meetings of urban blacks and whites, in different regions of the USA, began to resemble what is now called Pentecostalism. Stories of these meetings attracted visitors from Canada to American urban centres, including a party from Winnipeg who brought the word back to that expanding city with great success. Crees converted at the subsequent Winnipeg meetings then spread the message to the Fisher River Indian Reserve in 1907, beginning the practice of Pentecostalism among Canadian Aboriginal people. The early decades of the 20th century saw the development of new institutional frameworks for Pentecostal practice. Both in Canada and the USA, numerous Pentecostal denominations (such as the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada [PAOC], Canada's largest Pentecostal denomination) and networks coalesced, and international missions began. The subsequent expansion of Pentecostalism among many different ethnic groups around the world has been one of the success stories for Christianity over the past century. Pentecostalism is likely the largest non-Catholic branch of Christianity, claiming the allegiance of some 25% of Christians globally.

During the postwar period, numerous Evangelical and Pentecostal organizations and individuals began traveling north on missions. While overlapping in many respects, the movement as a whole remained multi-faceted, and can be characterized more as a network of networks. For instance, many Pentecostal missionaries in northern Alberta refused to cooperate with any denomination, even with Pentecostal denominations. In other cases, missionaries from different Non-Conformist denominations cooperated (including individual Quakers, Mennonites, and Baptists) in developing "Evangelical" mission networks, aided by non-denominational national missionary organizations, presses, and media. Along with denominational efforts such as the CMA's, these initial Evangelical missions were instrumental in training a cadre of Cree leaders who later helped spark the Pentecostal revolution in the region. Many of these Pentecostal leaders today continue to identify strongly with the historical (Evangelical) CMA mission in the region, in spite of significant theological and practical differences between them.

In Trout Lake, recent census data (Canada 2001) suggest that a clear majority of locals identify as Pentecostals or "Christians." While I suggest that this majority is a questionable figure, even so my data show that active Pentecostal adherence has been at relatively high levels (say 25-30% or more) in both Trout Lake and Peerless Lake since the late 1960s. This movement was preceded by a strong Evangelical network in the district, which grew up around the CMA mission at Peerless Lake starting in the late 1950s. challenging Roman Catholic hegemony. This long history presents me with the opportunity to write about Cree Pentecostalism, not as a small sect but as a mass movement of considerable longevity. My dissertation is a kind of story about this religious network, which I approach from many perspectives in hopes of gaining a glimpse of the whole.

Trout Lake is by no means the only Aboriginal community in Canada with a majority population of Pentecostals: Pentecostals are well represented across the arctic and subarctic. To confirm the broader profile of the issues I study, I present an example from national politics. In 2000, Quebec Cree Chief Matthew Coon Come won the leadership of Canada's national First Nations organization. During his term, Coon Come took a moralistic, biblically inspired stance on many questions (for instance, castigating chiefs for dancing and drinking), but a politically radical and confrontational stance on others (such as governance and land claims). Throughout his 2000-2003 term, Coon Come felt called to criticize his own constituents, but also to call upon the state for justice, and to threaten civil disobedience in support of political goals. Clearly, Cree Pentecostals are members of a national movement, with support and strategic engagement in other sectors of society. Accordingly, I propose that this thesis may have broader relevance beyond the region I am studying because of the national significance of the topic, and the gaps in research on it thus far as Aboriginal people are concerned.

Turning to my own background, I gain a sense of return and perspective by studying northern Alberta, in thinking about the relationships that my family has had and continues to have with this place. One of my fondest memories as an oral historian is that of interviewing my maternal grandmother, Mrs. Alberta Knox, in 2003, about her life story. Grandma was born in Alberta and moved north in 1928, as part of the second wave of settlement to the Peace River region. Through my mother's family's histories, and my own childhood visits north, some part of this place is written in my identity too. While it is true that Aboriginal people have been excluded from the broader society in important ways, nevertheless their involvement in the working class life of the Prairie Provinces should not be understated. Thomas Dunk (2003) has demonstrated the profound role played by Aboriginal people, issues, and images in constructing the identity of Euro-Canadians in hinterland regions, who often worked alongside or married Aboriginals. My family is no exception to this rule: I once met a Cree elder who had worked building a road in northwestern Alberta, alongside my mother's uncle, Frank

Knox. Frank, my grandfather Norman (Pete), and their brothers had hunted and trapped to survive the depression, while their wives picked berries.

William Auger, of Peerless Lake, told me, "That's what I want to hear, how we can come together. When you talk about your family I can tell you've lived in Alberta all your life."[3] William had been telling me about how, prior to and after the establishment of permanent communities in the interior, groups of people from all over the region (Trout Lake to Cadotte Lake) used to join together periodically to travel in horse-drawn sleighs to the town of Peace River: "You could see the smokes from the other sleighs' caboose stoves. So we knew we weren't alone." He added that people traveled together so they could use multiple teams of horses and multiple sets of chains for safe travel in and out of the deep, steep Peace River Valley. I mentioned to William that my parents and grandparents had told me similar stories, about mishaps with wagons and teams having runaways in steep wooded ravines, to which he responded with the above utterance, a coming together. His utterance underlines not only the interconnectedness of the places I study (in which related families dwell and travel together between communities),[4] but also their linkages to the broader rural society of past eras.

As for my interest in Aboriginal adaptations to Christianity, it is situated within my academic interest in Christianity in general. Although an atheist, I grew up in the United Church. While I initially was not drawn to a reflexive mode of analysis for this project, attention to this mode has been suggested both by the thesis' intended audience

---

[3] This is not strictly accurate: I was born in British Columbia and spent multiple periods of up to several months there (mainly as a pre-school child, traveling with my father's pipeline construction work itinerary), and in both Quebec and Ontario (as both a child and an adult).

[4] To provide but one example, William himself resided in Peerless Lake, was descended from leading figures in Trout Lake and Peerless Lake (maternally and paternally, respectively), and also recognized kin in Cadotte Lake, Loon River, and elsewhere. He had also previously resided in Cadotte Lake for a number of years.

(members of my doctoral committee) and by community collaborators. I have also been pushed in this direction through reading academic literature (*e.g.*, Beaucage and Meintel 2007:15), so I employ reflexivity modestly. Such an approach has relevance to this research because, during fieldwork, I am continuously queried about my religious background and knowledge, as well as being explicitly and implicitly implicated by church testimony.

When I am at funerals, I can take no comfort in the assurances of life after death. I live my life as a secular non-believer. Yet I remain deeply interested in the textual and social aspects of religion. Religion is an important social fact and its practitioners deserve a hearing. Perhaps I view religion as Clifford Geertz does, as "social histories of the imagination" (quoted in Csordas 1994:74). What about my metaphysical stance on the actual existence of God or his ability to heal (as attested by some of my collaborators)? As Edward T. Hall states:

> As a student and observer of human behavior, I am compelled to take the position that, until proved otherwise in irrevocable terms, the metaphysical must be viewed as simply one more variant of what the human species has experienced which must be taken as seriously as anything else that happens to human beings… In one sense I think it may be quite stubborn and blind on our part to treat the metaphysical as separate from "life" (Hall 1983:24).

At any rate, I can at least strive for this level of openness to the phenomena I study, while also respecting my own (generally agnostic, if not atheistic) framework of beliefs, which is a crucial part of my personality as a researcher.

While I have been honest with my consultants that I am a non-Christian, many are happy with my interest in their religion. When I began my attendance at a local Pentecostal church, Assistant Pastor Peter Thunder stated: "I hope we'll see you baptized here." Thus, it was clear that, although people were open to participating in my research project, they had a deeper concern for my salvation. Welcoming me was one way to promote this goal.

Later, Peter (who had become a friend and frequent collaborator) would urge me to think about a life and death decision that I had been learning about: that is, whether to be saved. While I would sometimes ask Peter questions designed to elicit a response about local Cree practices, he, for his part, underlined the universality of the Christian message, which was also, he stressed repeatedly, there for me. Other community members asked if I had really understood their testimony of faith: had I had a chance to think about it? I am always welcomed to services, and implicated by the testimony people give. Of course, this sincere friendliness also has my salvation as its object. It is a challenge for me to gracefully accept such care and attention, while rejecting in many respects its ontological and scriptural assumptions.

Research questions, thesis plan, and findings

My ethnographic examination of a Pentecostal congregation suggests that many people experience their commitments to Pentecostalism (often alongside other spiritual commitments) in a very personal way, one not readily compared or categorized. As such, I will address numerous research questions, which flow out of the initial question I had posed to myself in my friend's house at Cadotte Lake: "Who are these Cree Christians?" Having posed myself this question and finding it interesting, I then began to wonder, "How come I haven't been reading any ethnographies about these people?" These questions lead to larger questions, such as: What is the history of Pentecostalism in the Trout Lake/Cadotte Lake region? How does Pentecostal practice relate to other religious practices in the region? What is the function of discourse in Pentecostal religious practice? How do Pentecostals interpret their attachment to various aspects of Cree culture? What is the relationship of Pentecostalism to other political, social, and economic phenomena in the region (including land claims, inequality and other social problems, and resource development)? I explore these questions in this thesis.

As a doctoral dissertation, this document's primary intended audience is, necessarily, an academic one. Nevertheless, I hope that this research may also be of interest to some community members and others. Some chapters will be of more interest to specific readers than others. In general each chapter considers a structure or set or structures through or against which religion, and/or the analyst's understanding of religious phenomena, is defined or articulated. The first chapter concerns background on Trout Lake and Peerless Lake (the main communities I studied in), and my approach to the study. The second chapter provides information on the Cree language as spoken in the isolated communities and elsewhere; I also review principles of Pentecostal discourse, and my experiences in working with translators of Cree Pentecostal discourse. The third chapter examines, through archival sources, the missionary history of the isolated communities, and the means by which the region was drawn into Canadian and Albertan social and political history. The fourth chapter provides background on Cree religion as practiced prior to contact with Europeans, and on the manners in which these diffuse traditions continue, both to animate opposing traditions and to live on in their own right. Chapter Five examines theories and problems in representing and translating the phenomenon of personal conversion; I also review statistical data and narratives of conversion to analyze the trajectory of conversion on a societal level in Aboriginal communities. The we enter the temple: Chapter Six is a close examination of leadership, membership, and ritual practice of the *Faith in God's Temple* church, pastored by Mr. Johnny Noskiye, at Trout Lake. I close the thesis with a brief conclusion integrating my arguments and approaches to examine both the 'how' and 'why' of Pentecostal conversion.

It is perhaps appropriate that, having stated my questions and chapter outline, I would also set out here some of my broad findings, which will be mentioned and contextualized in due course throughout the thesis alongside supporting data. My pre-eminent finding is that Cree Pentecostal practice is consistent with many elements of Cree culture, but that Cree Pentecostals generally consider themselves Christians first and foremost. Their religion is both local and global; according to Richard Preston (1975a) those following prescribed behavioural norms gain the ability to participate in both Cree and white society in a manner consistent with autonomy and self-respect, while still allowing for loss of control in the ritual sphere. In this way, as Frédéric Laugrand (2002) proposes, new religious traditions may be received by converts as both a replacement for and a disjuncture from prior traditions. All in all, these theoretical approaches suggest that Pentecostalism has the potential to support or renovate, rather than tear down, Aboriginal social structures. This point brings me to my second finding.

In Trout Lake, Pentecostalism exists in a vital relationship with the use and maintenance both of the Cree language and of Cree speech norms and forms. Christianity was closely associated with the spread of literacy in Cree syllabics since the mid-19th century, and continues to have strong relevance to sociolinguistic trends in the community. Cree Pentecostals learn new registers and genres, which, while requiring the adjustment of some speech norms, in general reflect and support basic Cree cultural assumptions about appropriate discourse. Overall then, Pentecostalism contributes strongly to the maintenance of the Cree language, mainly through its emphasis on orality, but also through the development and distribution of media including a printed corpus of songs, scriptures, and other Cree writings, in both Cree Syllabics and Roman Orthography. So, in spite of the importance of orality and experience, there remains a strong emphasis on doctrine, scripture, and text in local Pentecostal practice. This may reflect the influence of Evangelical/Fundamentalist/Non-Conformist missionaries, who prepared the way for Pentecostals in northern Alberta. It also, no doubt, reflects the longtime work of Anglican and Catholic missionaries, who preceded these groups.

In what I suggest is a parallel to Aboriginal ontologies, oral tradition in Pentecostalism plays an important role in mediating experience of the Word and sharing knowledge of God. Such emphasis on the personal nature and importance of experience and knowledge in developing spiritual power is present in Pentecostalism, as well as in Cree and other religious traditions of the subarctic. An analysis focusing on knowledge and power, including the status of the ethnographer as a hunter for knowledge, is therefore indispensable, as Dawn Martin-Hill (2008) suggests, based on her research at Little Buffalo Lake, located close to Trout and Peerless.

I am striving in this thesis to combine approaches from symbolic anthropology with analysis of political economy (as suggested by Pauline Turner-Strong [2005:257] for the study of Native North American religious issues). As such, while not its primary focus, politics is never far from the subject matter of this thesis. In examining the history of the isolated communities since the 1870s and before, I try to understand the linkages of religious affiliation and practice with broader political economic processes. One line of argument that I am rejecting, based on my data, is that there is a strong relationship between Pentecostalism and either class status (taken as differentiation within the local community, based on production) or community activism on land claims, resource development, or Aboriginal rights. On a global level, there is currently not enough evidence to assess conflicting claims that have been presented in this regard (Robbins 2004a:131; *cf.* Navarro 2001, Thompson 1982), a conflict which reflects classical social science disputes.

I discuss the growth of state and corporate power in northern Alberta during the 19th century, and the subsequent regional denial of treaty and Aboriginal rights since 1900, in the context of an overall historical chapter focusing on missionary activities. In doing so I provide the first academic account focusing on the history of the Trout Lake district. In terms of church history, I am the first scholar to examine several newly archived records of the Christian Missionary Alliance church, and the first scholar to access that church's archival collection for an Aboriginal-focused research project. Furthermore, I make several contributions in other areas where others have carried out research in this district. Focusing on Fr. Roger Vandersteene, Earle Waugh (1996) touches on Pentecostalism, Evangelicalism, and Trout Lake, in support of his overall narrative. Thus, many important sources (including writings by Vandersteene and other Oblates, as well as archival and oral history sources on Evangelical and Pentecostal missionaries) on the growth of these sects in Trout Lake, which I access, were not explicated by Waugh. Finally, I begin the work of accessing Aboriginal files of Pentecostal and related archives and websites, which are scantly studied (but see Laugrand and Oosten 2007).

Cree Pentecostalism is a new kind of Christianity, not unlike Aboriginal adaptations of Roman Catholicism, Russian Orthodoxy, Moravianism, Methodism or Anglicanism, documented throughout the north. As a new religious tradition, it exists in interplay with its Others. These Others are religious traditions, predominantly Cree Spirituality and Roman Catholicism, but also Anglicanism, Evangelicalism, and multiple strands which could be referred to as Neo-Traditionalism. Accordingly, I find that many features of Cree Pentecostalism on an individual level, such as rationale for conversion and feeling tone of words used in ritual, can only be assessed by attempting also to understand the Other traditions predating, opposing, and/or underlying (but generally defining) Cree Pentecostalism, and their cognitive/emotional imprint.

For the Cree, as for many missionaries, personal networks and charisma were more important than denomination. Therefore, existing Cree kinship and political networks were the major connective tissues supporting widespread and rapid conversion to Pentecostalism and Evangelicalism. I find that conversion or revival tends to move in a wavelike fashion, with many people joining and falling away concurrently; such mass conversions or revivals may reach a tipping point where a cultural revolution occurs. However, it now appears that Pentecostalism itself may be facing a similar trajectory to its antecedents: following a rapid initial burst of converts building momentum towards an exclusive hold over local religious life, local churches are now faltering to maintain a remnant much smaller than their previous congregations. Thus, I offer a perhaps surprising vision of a possible future: one in which Pentecostalism may play a steadily decreasing role. My data suggests that Pentecostal conversion can be a response to stress or crisis, but that it is also strongly associated with a long term rise in the proportion of those espousing "no religion" (a category which itself may indicate allegiance to Cree traditionalism or inter-tribal neo-traditional practices), possibly sowing the seeds of its demise.

As I mentioned, willingness of Evangelicals to identify, promote, and ordain indigenous leaders (who could then provide liturgy and counseling in Cree) was to become a major factor in the success of the subsequent development of Evangelical/ Pentecostal movements in the region, and (to a lesser extent) in the subsequent development of an effective political leadership cadre since the 1960s. Pentecostals held approximately one third of political seats in Trout during my fieldwork, less in Peerless. This may be a good indicator of the proportion of active Pentecostals (as opposed to census data suggesting a Pentecostal majority in Trout) in each community, based on political support for these candidates. As in traditional Cree society, political and religious leaders are often one and the same, since the two roles require similar skills: including fluency in specialized registers of both Cree and English. This political/ecclesiastical leadership cadre broker contacts with the outside world, while working closely with a group of unilingual elders (some of whom are former community leaders), who provide advice and legitimacy internally. Both elders and leaders could be considered cultural/linguistic brokers. My identification of such leadership cadre is a significant contribution to subarctic church and political studies.

A final contribution of this thesis, which inspired many of the findings or questions set out just above, is that I provide the most up-to-date published review of literature pertaining to Pentecostalism among Aboriginal people in Canada. It is to this literature review that I turn now.

Academic approaches to Aboriginal Pentecostalism

My initial inclination (inspired by master's fieldwork, but not developed during my MES) to study Pentecostalism among the Cree was reaffirmed during my PhD. During doctoral study I took Cree language courses; we learned some Christian vocabulary, including Christmas carols in Cree. Cree Instructor Marjorie Memnook would occasionally talk about the similarities she perceived between Christianity and Cree spirituality. Some Aboriginal students openly objected to learning about Christianity, on the grounds that Christianity had damaged Aboriginal cultures. These young scholars stated that a local Aboriginal Spirituality movement, based on inter-tribal traditions, represented more legitimacy to them. It seemed to me that this attitude, on the part of young and relatively educated people, reflected a disposition that the beliefs of Christians were not suitable for real Indians. For their part, some northern Cree Christians, with whom I have discussed the issue, consider such criticism, from "Indians who don't speak Cree," as curious: "How can they get after us when all we're trying to do is help people stop drinking?" asked one Trout Lake Pentecostal evangelist, the late William Houle.

I have now seen this debate from a variety of perspectives, as almost every Aboriginal person with whom I discuss my research already has views on Pentecostalism. Many, who follow other religious traditions, complain about what they perceive as Pentecostals' judgmental attitude. Some local people simply describe Pentecostal congregations in general as "cults."[5] Meanwhile, over the past 40 years, other predominantly Aboriginal religious movements have also adopted practices and adapted discourse strongly reminiscent of Pentecostalism. I have seen the use of guitar pop and country music (including tunes common to Pentecostal worship) among Catholic worshipers[6] at the Lac Ste. Anne Pilgrimage;[7] exhortations by Catholic priests (explicitly responding to the claims of Protestant missionaries) at the pilgrimage that being "born again" is best enacted through Catholic rituals; conversion-style narratives and abstemiousness evident among some adherents of Neo-Traditionalism (*cf.* Bousquet 2007a). Thus, these opposing movements also react and respond to Pentecostalism, sometimes in ways that validate key assumptions of Pentecostalism (*cf.* Goldlin and Metz 1991, Stuckenberger 2005). So one must look at the total field, to go beyond name-calling and discern the multiple flows and reforms that characterize both the social structures of Pentecostalism and the antitheses of Pentecostalism evident in competing religious traditions.

---

[5] There may be grounds for this view in some cases. One network active in northern Alberta (including Peerless Lake during my fieldwork) is the Potter's House, which has affiliates in other Aboriginal communities. The Potter's House, an independent Pentecostal network founded in the USA, has been accused by numerous analysts of using inappropriate and isolating recruitment and retention techniques

My research furthers the work of several others who have recently done work on Aboriginal Pentecostalisms. The complexity of this phenomenon requires considerable analytical sophistication, involving a double vision of Pentecostal practice as entailing

---

(many such reports and articles may be reviewed in the Kent-Drever Collection on Alternative Religions. U of A Libraries Special Collections. Potter's House File). This is one operational definition of the word "cult." I hasten to point out that no northern Alberta branches of this network, which appears to be relatively loosely organized regionally, were cited for inappropriate practices in the files I reviewed.

[6] Many consultants, including one religious, stated that the Catholic Church did not use this kind of music locally, prior to the advent of Pentecostal missions, and that incorporating this type of music was a deliberate strategy to diminish the appeal and difference of Pentecostalism.

[7] During the 1840s, Lac Ste. Anne ('*manito sâkahikan*') was the site of the first Protestant and Catholic missions in Alberta. Many people in Cadotte, Trout, and Peerless are descendants of the Métis who wintered at Lac Ste. Anne during the 19th century. This important lake attracted people from many tribes, seeking healing from its waters. Roman Catholic priests built on this healing tradition, by supporting continued pilgrimages to the lake under the auspices of devotions to Jesus' grandmother, Ste. Anne. Today, this annual pilgrimage, held in July, attracts tens of thousands of Aboriginal people from all over North America, including a significant number of my acquaintances from Trout Lake and elsewhere. (See Anderson-McLean 1999 for a recent discussion of Lac Ste. Anne as a site of ritualized Aboriginal identity.)

both conversion from and continuity with Aboriginal cultural traditions and social institutions.

The internal debate between Aboriginal people over Pentecostalism and traditionalism is a struggle within communities over how to define "culture" (*cf.* Abu-Lughod 1991, Dombrowski 2001), which, as such, is bound to attract the interest of anthropologists. Nevertheless, globally, Joel Robbins suggests that anthropologists have a blind spot related to salvage-oriented "continuity thinking" (quoting article title. 2007), that anthropologists have actively sought out non-Christian groups, and have attempted to ignore or read under Christianity where they do find it. The tendency to avoid writing about Christianity is amplified where Pentecostalism and Evangelicalism are concerned. This has begun to change, as anthropologists studying throughout the world (Garrard-Burnett 1996, Meyer 1999) and in mainstream North America (Shoaps 2002) look relativistically and respectfully at local Pentecostalisms and Evangelicalisms. Nevertheless, in spite of the worldwide advancement seen in this research agenda over the past decade, as regards Aboriginal North America the tendency among academics to neglect or denigrate Pentecostalism in their subject communities has continued. Admittedly, anthropologists have produced some fine books on Aboriginal Christianity in Canada (Goulet 1998, Philips Valentine 1995), but as a rule this has not yet extended to Pentecostalism.

As Hans Mol notes about Aboriginal Christianity, "Our (*i.e.,* Euro-Canadian) culture seems to put a premium on native separateness as though the whites themselves project on the native… their own nostalgia for pockets of meaningful belonging" (1985:58). I assert this is true of anthropologists as well. I continue to meet other professionals at anthropological conferences, who become uncomfortable when I tell them I focus on Pentecostalism as a growing movement among northern Aboriginals. This is, of course, a blatantly anti-relativist response. One such person, who responded, "What a pity!" was studying the interactions of Buddhism with shamanism in Central Asia; however she apparently did not see the utility of looking at the encounter of Pentecostalism with Aboriginal religion. Such attitudes may reflect a residual anti-American, or anti-Christian, academic mindset among many anthropologists, I suggest. It is also a somewhat judgmental substitution for a more nuance, relativist, and grounded awareness that social science researchers should strive to develop.

In spite of such receptions, nevertheless some anthropologists and others studying Native North American religions are becoming interested in the problem of Pentecostalism and culture. Many established Algonquianists encouraged me to pursue my Cree Pentecostal research as overdue. They confirmed that existing secondary literature on Aboriginal Pentecostalism in North America remains limited and fragmentary. Church histories, happenstance ethnographic mentions, and occasional journalistic accounts provide some information on Pentecostalism and Evangelicalism; however, these references are scattered, often prejudicial, rarely contain insider views, and (almost without exception) do not reference one another (but see Preston 1975a).

In a recent international panel discussion on conversion and social cohesion in the circumpolar north, Chris Southcott (2008) affirmed that Pentecostals are an important social movement (and a major player in the social economy) throughout Canada's north; Pentecostals take diverse stances on various issues from time to time and place to place. Nevertheless, apart from some scattered references collected by

Southcott, little scholarly interest or awareness of this movement is evident. Southcott suggests that there is a constant negotiation of indigenous and Christian identity on the part of converts to Pentecostalism, that Pentecostalism provides alternative sources of community engagement and indigenous culture, and that this movement is differentially active in many spheres of northern Aboriginal society. So, I take from Southcott that there may be no essential Pentecostal stance for analysts to critique, just as there is no essential Indian for Pentecostals to convert.

A small number of Canadian anthropologists (such as Adrian Tanner, Antonia Mills, and Richard Preston) have turned their attention to Pentecostal practices in their subarctic field sites. While Tanner confirms that the Quebec Cree in general maintain a strongly animist orientation, he considers Pentecostalism as one in an array of available choices over healing practices (2004).[7] In more recent work (in press), he has fine-tuned some of his earlier (*e.g.,* 1979:211) findings, to assert that James Bay Cree Pentecostals are not (or are no longer) more likely than others to be involved in bush activities. Tanner further suggests that many Pentecostals continue to believe in animal spirits and their efficacy regarding hunting, even though Pentecostals do not generally participate in animist rituals (Tanner 2004; in press).

Mills (1986), in an article focusing on Pentecostal ritual among the Beaver, demonstrates that Pentecostal adherents maintain a strong connection to traditional Beaver ritual forms and themes in their Pentecostal ritual practice. In general, the attendees at the outdoor meeting Mills describes appear to draw more openly on Beaver tradition than the congregants I studied draw on Cree forms in their ritual. Even so, Mills' and Tanner's findings on the relation between animism or traditional spirituality with Pentecostalism have encouraged me to re-examine some of my data, and to look behind Pentecostal discourse (especially as promoted by my pastoral hosts) to query the more diverse and traditionally oriented daily practice of many other church affiliates.

---

[7] On the importance of healing in Pentecostal practice among Aboriginals, see also Bousquet 2007a, Brown 2003, Candler 1999, Csordas 1994, Ferrara 2004, Fletcher and Kirmayer 1997, Garrity 2000, Niezen 1997, Waugh 1996.

Since the early 1960s, Preston (1975a; 1985; in press) has been in a position to witness in northern Quebec many of the changes I will be documenting herein for northern Alberta, and has thoughtfully and repeatedly written about Pentecostalism. His 1975 article analyzes Cree Pentecostalism as a cultural response to rapid change, showing signs both of continuity and discontinuity with Cree values. Preston may have been the first analyst to note the essential independence of Pentecostal churches, which, once propagated by outsiders or returned insiders, tend to maintain themselves at a community network level. I too find that this shift to local leadership has been key to developing and maintaining Pentecostal congregations. Crucially, he also considers how Pentecostal conversion may allow people to achieve both "white" and "Indian" standards of behaviour, competence, and self-reliance (*i.e.,* by not drinking), even while remaining outside of mainstream white society and away from white control over ritual space (*cf.* Pelkmans *et al* 2005). Thus, Pentecostalism allows people to regain self-control in some areas, such as over sin, while surrendering it in others, such as through ritual (Preston 1975a:122). With these theoretical innovations in mind, it is interesting to note that Preston nevertheless characterized Pentecostalism as a negative aspect of Cree society, seeing many of its adherents (in 1975) as marginal or town- (as opposed to bush-)

oriented families and individuals, who tended to favour development projects over traditional ways.

Preston continued to refine his views in a 1985 article, considering Pentecostal tunes as one new genre in Cree music, theorizing the cultural transformations that accompanied such new genres. In a more recent article (in press), he has gone further, revising some of his 1975 findings and providing time depth to his analysis of East Cree Pentecostalism. Preston describes 21st century East Cree Pentecostalism as more open and less exclusive than previously. For instance, he provides some data to indicate that many Pentecostals are now more accepting of bush-based spiritual practices, as well as allowing discursive rituals such as traditional drumming in church, than had been the case. Consistent with Preston's 1975a, 1975b:14, and 1985 analyses, he asserts that modification and blending of spiritual practice is done in the search for new types of autonomy, expressing tension between individual and social. The emphasis on autonomy itself resembles that seen in traditional Cree hunting culture.

In spite of such interest, shown by some well-known anthropologists since the 1970s, overall the study of Aboriginal Pentecostal practices has remained underdeveloped. With the exception of Kirk Dombrowski's 2001 study of Pentecostalism in southeastern Alaska, *Against Culture: Development, Politics, and Religion in Indian Alaska*, no book-length study of Pentecostalism in Native North America exists. While a pioneering achievement in many respects, *Against Culture* suffers from some limitations, including a tendency (albeit disavowed) to view Pentecostal conversion as a phenomenon largely secondary to economic change and other social dislocations, and to deny the commensurability of Pentecostalism with Native culture (see reviews: Kan 2003, Nadasdy 2002, Thornton 2005).

Dombrowski's major theoretical contribution is his observation that Aboriginal Pentecostals (and all people) live both within and against their culture. Furthermore, "Pentecostal church membership offers people an institution through which many of their own feelings about the failure of current identity projects can be expressed" (2001:14). He contends that the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) has created two classes of local residents, with differential access to jobs, resources, and subsistence rights. Dombrowski suggests that poor Alaska Natives, who must hunt for food, are more drawn to Pentecostalism, while wealthier, bureaucratically employed or recognized counterparts are more involved in Native culture and/or more traditional Christian denominations. This analysis cannot be sustained when broader regional data are taken into account (Kan 2003, Thornton 2005), and does not reflect the complexity I will describe in the region I studied. In a recent article, Dombrowski steps away from linking conversion primarily to economic status (2007:223-4).

Like Dombrowski, my analysis also shows the important relations between Pentecostalism, traditionalism, land claims, economic change, and "identity projects." I also appreciate his focus on how all people live both within and "against" their culture. Yet I want to suggest that conversions to Pentecostalism draw on a wide range of individual factors and interpretations, the analysis of which should incorporate, but not be subordinate to, consideration of economics and politics. In my reading, Dombrowski's theory about the failure of current identity projects resembles elements of Preston's proposal that Cree Pentecostals seek to conform to both white and Indian norms of behaviour and autonomy. One might also mention Waugh's (1996) contention that many Cree in the Trout Lake area rejected an indigenized Catholicism in favour of Pentecostalism, partly because they desired to participate more fully in Canadian society, rather than follow an ethnically based religion, even while they saw in Pentecostalism strong correspondences to Cree spiritual practice.

A recent contribution by Frédéric Laugrand and Jarich Oosten (2007) on Inuit Pentecostalism/Evangelicalism further explores the linkage between Pentecostalism and Aboriginal culture, and begins the type of work that is required to document ritual practice and organizational history of these groups in northern Canada. By conducting fieldwork on Pentecostal ritual, as well as archival and internet research, Laugrand and Oosten focus on the role of Pentecostalism in "reconnecting people and healing the land" (quoting article title), partially through prayers against localized Inuit spirits (*cf.* DeBernardi 1999). Of relevance to my thesis, they document the role played by some of the same denominations and networks that have been active in northern Alberta, such as the CMA, PAOC, and NCEM.

Anja Stuckenberger (2005) analyzes Pentecostalism in the Inuit community of Qikiqtarjuaq, NU, in the context of an overall discussion of "play" (quoting book title) in a changing community. She provides detailed information on the social and leadership dynamics within congregations, as well as their links to territorial, national, and international networks and, crucially, the impact of Pentecostalism on local Anglican religious practice. Like Louis-Jacques Dorais (1997), Stuckenberger (2005:86) notes close similarities between key pre-Christian practices among the Inuit (such as confession) and those of Pentecostals.

Returning to Algonquianist literature, Marie-Pierre Bousquet (2007a) describes Pentecostalism among Algonqins as resembling Pan-Indianism: part innovation and part revitalization of shamanic power. A major strength of Bousquet's approach is to present the different religious choices, open to individuals, as non-closed categories. That is, the distinct traditions influence one another (with some elders seeing the Pentecostal message as closely linked to Catholic values), but also, individuals may blend them, or move freely between groups. Moving past the supposed inflexibility of Pentecostal belief, Bousquet calls attention to the suppleness of day-to-day practices, which allow people to adapt their beliefs to social and community life. Moreover, as she points out, traditional and neo-traditional movements have also adopted dualistic ontologies, abstemiousness, and proselytization, which many critics associate with Pentecostalism.

Within the north as a whole, relevant literature for my topic is limited, as I have shown. Some of the above sources touch briefly on Pentecostalism, while others develop the issue more fully. Clearly, much theoretical and empirical research remains. Notably, little relevant research has been undertaken within northern Alberta, as befits the generally neglected status of regional ethnology (Smith 1981:259, Lewis 1982:20). The particular lack of regionally relevant literature also exemplifies a larger trend: that of "producing the ethnographic absence of Christianity" (Robbins 2007:7).

One exception to this is Waugh 1996, an important source for Cree Christianity in general. While focusing mainly on Catholicism, Waugh also discusses Evangelicalism and Pentecostalism in a sensitive, informative manner (1996:154-5; 301). He states that there is a basic compatibility between seeking spiritual blessings through Pentecostalism and seeking spirit helpers in the traditional Cree religion (1996: 301, *cf.* Dorais 1997:72, Grant 1984:202, Mills 1986, Preston 1975a:121). In keeping with his main focus on Fr. Roger Vandersteene, Waugh touches on Pentecostalism, Evangelicalism, and Trout Lakes. However, Waugh does not explicate a number of important sources (including writings by Vandersteene and other Oblates, as well as archival and oral history sources on Evangelical and Pentecostal missionaries) about the growth of Pentecostalism and Evangelicalism in the isolated communities. It is here that I wish to make a contribution.

Most other researchers who have worked in northern Alberta since the 1960s simply do not mention the rapidly growing independent Pentecostal congregations (*e.g.*, Sawchuk and Gray 1980; but see Candler 1999 for an edited transcript and analysis of an interview with a Wabasca Pentecostal elder). In some cases (*e.g.*, Gregoret 1980) this may be partly due to the researcher's reliance on the Catholic mission as a research base. In other cases, the researcher is more obviously hostile to Pentecostalism. In his account of the Lubicon Cree (headquartered at Little Buffalo Lake) land claim, John Goddard (1991) writes that people in Little Buffalo began turning to Evangelical groups during the early 1990s, as their frustration with land claim politics grew. He suggests that this damaged solidarity in the community, thus causing a negative influence. Through Goddard's argument, Evangelicals/Pentecostals are made scapegoats for the failure of Lubicon leadership to include, organize, represent, and mobilize a divided local population to participate in a contested civil disobedience campaign focused on arguably unrealistic negotiation/litigation goals. Goddard's critique also lets other levels of government off the hook to a lesser degree.

Goddard's critique ignores the following facts: Evangelicals had been present in Little Buffalo since at least the 1950s; a Cree Pentecostal missionary from Little Buffalo traveled to Trout Lake in the 1960s. That is, Christianity is not only forced on the communities from without; it is also propagated between, within, and among them. Goddard prejudicially compares Evangelicalism to other symptoms of social unease such as drinking and fighting (213), which diminished the political solidarity of the Lubicon Band. Pentecostal leaders in other parts of the region (such as Cadotte, Trout/Peerless, and Wabasca-Desmarais) have proved it is possible to negotiate land claims and similar agreements in communities that are religiously divided and/or numerically dominated by Pentecostals, so I find that Goddard's proposed linkage between Pentecostalism, land claims, and political solidarity is not supported by data. While denigrating Pentecostalism, Goddard attends to and uses as a symbol a Cree ritual, the Tea Dance, favouring one religion over the other in his view of the ideal Cree society.

Striking a more conciliatory note on many regional issues than Goddard, while still promoting an activist analysis of the Lubicon land claim, Mohawk scholar Martin-Hill (2008) provides a more balanced account both of land claims politics (63) and religious practice (150) in the isolated communities. She mentions the ongoing dispute about elements of traditional culture between Christians and other members of the Little Buffalo community, while asserting that if traditional ways are redefined as cultural ways (toning down the religious implications), Christians may find them easier to accept. This observation is made in an overall analytical context that appears to favour traditionalists. I would add that this is part of a larger debate within Cree society about what "religion" and "culture" really mean. Perhaps this debate over meaning has relevance to current academic debates on identity.

Academics' (and some Aboriginal policy community elites') focus on traditionalism among Aboriginal peoples may expose a "southern agenda" (Philips Valentine 1995:49). For Lisa Philips Valentine, neo-traditional religious networks potentially promote the "folklorization of identity" (*ibid*:163), devaluing the beliefs of Christian Indians. Anthropologists cannot focus solely on tradition (*ibid*:130), she writes, particularly as many traditions are themselves a response to missionization (*ibid*:131). While founded in Philips Valentine's study of Severn Ojibwe Anglicanism in the 1970s, such insights have continued relevance for my study of relations between Pentecostalism, Anglicanism, Catholicism, neo-traditionalism, and traditionalism in contemporary Alberta. Even to define the "religions" named in the previous sentence as five distinct entities, which do not draw on or converge into one another, is to oversimplify the equation. Many Aboriginal people see no contradiction in practicing elements of these and other various traditions in an ensemble (Amoss 1978:240, Bousquet 2007a, Brown 2003:4-5, Dombrowski 2001:120-121, McNally 2000:10-11, Palmer 2005:18), with Pentecostalism as one element, which might be emphasized or deemphasized according to choice or situation.

As a final note to clarify or elevate my intentions for this effort, I will quote from Bambi Schieffelin's comment on Robbins' 2007 previously mentioned article in *Current Anthropology*:

> An anthropology of Christianity integrating linguistic and cultural practices that takes into consideration innovation and cultural change would be a productive context for developing models that integrate continuity and discontinuity thinking. Our view of linguistic practices and languages as relatively detachable from their original cultural moorings could influence our theories of culture. Can we imagine using concepts from language contact, shift, and change, involving syncretic, polyvalent and heteroglossic forms in at least some domains? Conjoining linguistic and cultural practices, we should be able to model

> discontinuity, transformation and variation, all of them critical to articulating an anthropology of Christianity (Schieffelin comment in Robbins 2007:28).

Schieffelin and others emphasize the theoretical and methodological tools available within anthropology for the study of cultural change. My goal is to document some of the flux and flow (Tweed 2006), which I see in my field site and its records.

Community context

Figure Two: Trout Lake

sakâw ('bush') covers northern Alberta and has been home to Cree-speaking people, *sakâw-iyiniwak*, ('bush people' ['Western Woods Cree,' in ethnological terms]) for generations, certainly since before European traders reached the region. In spite of encroachments by industry in many areas, the region retains its natural beauty. Tree growth in the boreal plains alternates between shimmering stands of aspen and dark foreboding white spruce. In sandier areas (the beaches and beds of prehistoric lakes), jackpines grow; in moister regions, birch and stunted black spruce are found. In season, shrubs, sedges, tiny flowers, roots, and berries prevail everywhere amongst the ever-present trees.

A major feature of the landscape is its poor drainage creating many lakes, slow meandering rivers, and huge muskegs (from *maskek*, a Cree word meaning "swamp"). In some areas, the boreal forest is interrupted by parklands. Here the landscape resembles that around Edmonton: stands of aspen alternating with open grassy areas. The open areas are called *maskote* ('prairies'). In the pre-contact period the "prairies" supported in a patchwork localized plains-like ecosystem, including buffalo and elk. This balance has changed somewhat since agricultural settlement: the Peace River-Grande Prairie districts have been progressively cleared of timber for farming, while easterly areas became more heavily forested through the decline of large herbivores, reduction of beaver activity, suppression of natural forest fires, and decline of anthropogenic fires (formerly used by Aboriginals to create hunting habitat). This resource management regime has tended to bifurcate northern Alberta somewhat artificially: into a forested area in the east and a more open farmed area in parts of the west and north, along the middle Peace and lower Smoky rivers and some tributaries, as well as in the Grande Prairie area to their west-southwest.

Most of the landscape is flat, with a slight downward tilt towards the east and north. Periodically, distinct uplands and large hills (*wâci*, or 'mountains') are salient. Trout Lake and Peerless Lake are the largest in a collection of lakes located on one such hilly plateau at the headwaters of the Trout River, a small river that flows south into the Wabasca River and thence north into the Peace. Aboriginal people were originally drawn to the region by the bounty of its forests and fisheries, and more recently for its isolation from Euro-Canadian settlement.

The Aboriginal people of the place I am writing about did not traditionally dwell at one spot but used a network of known places and trails seasonally,[8] in concert with earthly kin and spiritual helpers. Elders today can name the stopping places on a bush trail between Trout Lake and the Peace River, near its confluence with the Little Red River, hundreds of kilometers to the north. The connected lakes which are today known as Peerless Lake and Graham ('Trout') Lake were historically known as Trout Lake(s); the stream connecting them was known as Trout Lake Narrows. For clarity, throughout the historical portion of this dissertation, I will generally refer to Trout/Peerless as Trout Lake, since no permanent settlement existed at Peerless Lake until the late 1950s. Trout Lake is also the name of an HBC trading post, which was the main establishment in the district for most of the period between 1870 and 1950, though it was rarely without competition.

Most people residing in this area during the 19th and early 20th centuries simply considered themselves as *nehiyawak* ('Cree' or 'Indians'), without regard to ethnostatus distinctions. Nevertheless, throughout the historic period, there have also been people living here who regarded themselves as Métis. It also appears that, as late as 1918, a small number of Chipewyans resided in this region (White 1918:4). Chipewyans resided in the region (at such places as Chipewyan Lake) at the dawn of its orally recorded history, but many were chased away by the Cree before peace was made. The remaining

---

[8] Named and known dwelling places, supporting a seasonal population, as mentioned in the historical literature since the 1880s and down to the present, as well as in my oral history research, include in the immediate vicinity of Trout/Peerless Lake: God's Lake, Round Lake, Long Lake, Equisetem Lake, Kidney ('Twin') Lakes, Island ('Vandersteene') Lake, Mariah ('Cranberry') Lake, Goosegrass Lake, and Goodfish Lake. Other named and known places slightly further afield include Loon Lake, Chipewyan Lake, Island Lake, Horse Lake, Bear Lake, Deep Lake, Burnt Lake, Calf Lake, Big Prairie, Moose Lake, Spruce Lake, Duck Lake, Little Prairie, Wabasca River, Beaver River ('Peace River'), "Peace River" (a minor river), Rabbit Hills, and Pîskwas Prairie. Of all these places, only Trout, Peerless, Loon, and Chipewyan Lakes are permanently inhabited today, the latter having a population of less than 100.

Chipewyans slowly left the region or married into the Cree majority by the mid-20th century; today Chipewyan-dominated First Nations share the eastern periphery of Bigstone Cree Nation traditional territory. Many if not most people in the isolated communities also have Beaver, Métis, Ojibwa, and/or Iroquois ancestry.

While all the communities I studied in can be reached by road, the region still feels remote. Trout Lake settlement, in particular, is literally the end of the road. To reach Trout Lake, one must travel 90 km from Red Earth Creek (a resource hamlet with few services) on a winding dirt resource road that can be charitably described as unpredictable. Furthermore, one is 250 km from the nearest town (Peace River).

Trout Lake has a population of approximately 350 and Peerless Lake has a population of approximately 450. The settlements are located 25 km apart. As I will discuss in due course, the region's population was divided historically between Indians and Métis. Today, however, nearly all residents are considered Status Indians. Most are members of the Bigstone Cree Nation (BCN), headquartered at Wabasca-Desmarais, some 300 km away by road. BCN is one of the largest First Nations in Canada, in terms of population. Wabasca was the centre for regional trade, missionary, reserve creation, and education efforts during the early to middle 20th century. At Trout and Peerless, there are no reserves and (as of 2005-6) no local representatives on the BCN council.

Negotiations are under way for a land base and new band for these communities. According to an Agreement in Principle concluded in 2007, a separate First Nation with considerable new infrastructure and reserve lands is to be created at Trout/Peerless.[9] This 'band split' will represent the fulfillment of long-standing local aspirations, based on a negotiated agreement with BCN in the context of the land claim. Until this occurs, they will continue to receive only a patchwork of services, mainly provided by the provincial government with little Aboriginal-specific programming, since BCN is only funded by Ottawa to deliver programs to residents of its reserves near Wabasca and Calling lakes.

---

[9] Canada. 2007. Backgrounder - Bigstone Cree Nation and Communities of Calling Lake, Chipewyan Lake, Peerless Lake and Trout Lake Agreement-in-Principle. http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/nr/prs/s-d2007/2-2945-bk-eng.asp. Accessed February 10, 2008.

Pierre Bourdieu (1982) argues for the inadequacy of discursive studies that do not take account of political, economic, and historic factors. Throughout recent decades of land claims negotiation, litigation, and clarification of Aboriginal rights, resource development in the region has accelerated multifold, even as claims remain unsettled. Governments have moved a development agenda forward assisted by nefarious retroactive legislative changes, evacuations of settlements, and generally pro-business policies on the part of the provincial and federal states. The Lesser Slave Lake Interior is the source of considerable wealth for Alberta. The region is also the home of many impoverished Aboriginal people living in poorly serviced communities, bearing the brunt of forestry/oil/gas/oilsands exploration/development in many ways. While my thesis is not primarily focused on political economy, I thus remain conscious of its importance.

Trout Lake and Peerless Lake are geographically spread out. Most homes sit on large yards including corrals, outbuildings, and work areas. Many people live in loose compounds of two or more closely situated residences containing related families. Stands of trees provide shelter and privacy. For many people, their home in the community is just one building, part of a known set of dwelling places including cabins or camping sites on the land. Still, homes in the community can be crowded and several are in poor repair. Some people have built their own houses, a few in cooperation with local job-creation programs. Others live in mobile homes or in homes paid for through old provincial housing programs, from the 1980s and before. New homes are scheduled to arrive with the promised land claim settlement. Currently, no one has a basement.

Three small stores serve the region; still, even basics can be difficult to get, necessitating a trip to Red Earth Creek. A few home-based businesses exist. One post office at Trout Lake serves the region (with boxes at Peerless Lake); the area is out of cellular phone range,[10] accentuating the feeling of remoteness. Many people regularly travel to Peace River, Slave Lake, or High Prairie (250-270 km away) for supplies. People will travel even further for highly paid work opportunities, medical and religious requirements, fur sales, hay or equipment purchases, or hunting. As such, long road trips are an important part of community life. Occasionally, in summer, the communities are put on evacuation notice because of forest fires, as there is only the one access road.

Health care services are provided by local clinics, ambulance, and referral van. Doctors and dentists are occasionally flown in; maintaining a presence of nurses is a persistent challenge for the 'local' health board, the jurisdiction of which stretches to near the northern boundaries of Edmonton. Community health workers are trained to provide some services; mental health workers visit on occasion. Policing is provided by the RCMP from Red Earth Creek; fire service is provided by the Alberta government (for forest fires) and (notionally) by the Red Earth Creek Volunteer Fire Department (for fires in the community). Efforts to start a volunteer fire department in Trout and Peerless have not been successful to date. Services and infrastructure will likely be improved through the proposed land claim settlement.

---

[10] Dial-up internet service is available at the school, community offices, and for those few houses that have both a phone and a computer.

The 2001 census (Canada 2001) provides several insights into the social geography of the communities. Similar number of people are legally married as live in common-law relationships. A significant number of couples have three or more children. The mean number of children per census family is approximately two; most families live in small two or three-bedroom homes. In both Trout and Peerless, labour market participation is low: hovering around 50% (Peerless) or below (Trout); the unemployment is over 20% in each community (close to 50% in Trout). These unemployment numbers are very high by national and especially provincial standards, but are still much lower than those seen in many other northern communities. This testifies to the economic benefit of Alberta's petroleum economy (relative to some other Aboriginal communities, outside Alberta), but also indicates that Aboriginal people do not receive an equitable share of these benefits (relative to other Alberta communities). As one might expect, the rate or labour force participation is lower for females, and the rate of unemployment is higher. The most significant occupational group in the labour force is that of trades, transport and equipment operators, followed by administration and educational workers, and occupations in primary industry. Interestingly, occupations in religion are statistically significant in Trout Lake, with census suggesting as many as 10 people may fall into this category, although my research confirms that the number is somewhat lower. Income is much lower than the Canadian average: in 2000, average and median family incomes in Peerless were each under $40,000; in Trout, under $20,000. To say the least, this does not compare favourably to provincial and national median family incomes of over $70,000 for that year.[11] In 2000, over half the families in Trout, and over one third of the families in Peerless, declared no employment income. 75% of residents in Trout Lake were considered low income, as were over 15% of residents in Peerless. In 2000, government transfers accounted for nearly half of the total income in Trout, and over a quarter of total income in Peerless.

---

[11] Statistics Canada. 2001. Median Family Income.
http://www12.statcan.ca/english/census01/products/highlight/Income/Page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo=PR&View

The majority of those aged 15-24 in 2001 were not attending school. While a small number of people (less than 10% of the population) have some postsecondary training (including trades), the great majority of local adults have not completed secondary school. The population is young: in 2001, over 48% of Trout Lake's population and over 49% of Peerless Lake's population were aged 19 or under (Canada 2001). Correspondingly, the major permanent employer in each community is the school.[12] This is fitting since both Trout and Peerless were founded as communities around schools that were the focus of competing missionary projects (see Chapter Three). Other significant employers in the communities are the Municipal District of Opportunity (the most important level of local government in terms of service provision) and (taken together) other public sector actors such as community associations, youth centre, preschool centres, BCN, and Aspen health board, each of which might employ two to three local people. The main beneficiaries of these latter parapublic sector jobs are women; however, most political leaders on these boards are men, some of whom draw regular paychecks or honoraria from their political activities. As such, "political leader" is also a significant local employment category. There is also a Job Corps for (mainly) men. It provides some services to community members, such as construction and repair, as well as skills training for workers. Beyond this formal economy, services

---

=1a&Table=1a&StartRec=1&Sort=2&B1=Family1&B2=Spouse1. Accessed July 15, 2008.

[12] While the school and health board employ a small number of transplanted professionals in each community, most of the staff of these institutions is composed of local people.

such as oil changes, tire repairs, and other odd jobs are performed on a private cash or barter basis.

The community associations play a role in training workers for available jobs, and acting as go-betweens for companies and workers. Thus, the main source of jobs for men is in resource extraction. Many men work for oil companies on a steady or intermittent basis as mechanics, truck drivers, labourers, slashers, heavy equipment operators, or gas plant staff. Some work locally while others travel to other parts of Alberta and adjacent regions for work. Other people are also entrepreneurs: running forestry operations, graders, and oil service companies. A substantial number of men and one or two women work for a locally owned forestry company in the winter. These individuals live out of a camp, where the men often hunt to supply themselves with fresh meat, prepared by the local women employed as cooks. Forest fire fighting provides a stream of income for some men in the summer. Employment Insurance supplements seasonal wages for those who qualify.

Very few people trap full time in the winter anymore, though this was much more common thirty years ago. Many factors such as declining fur demand (and associated catastrophic drop in prices) during the late 20th century, habitat loss, and increasing local integration with the industrial economy could explain this trend. Nevertheless, trapping is still regularly pursued by a number of men (including some younger men) as well as a few women, and contributes substantially to the financial bottom line of at least a few households. Trapping also provides some practitioners with the means to finance the time they spend in the bush, and thus is a vital component of bush production, supporting hunting and other elements.

In spite of some decline in trapping, other foraging activities remain very important to members of these communities. Based on informal observation, I would suggest that virtually all households eat traditional foods on a daily basis. Dry meat was often available during my house visits. Many community members shared meat and fish with me, including such memorable dishes as broiled muskrat, which I found quite tasty. Seasonally, many people go out to collect eggs on lake islands; these are a delight to eat and are offered generously to the visitor.

Fishing, in particular, makes a major contribution to local tables. Both Trout and Peerless lakes are large and deep by local standards. People fish with nets in a food fishery, which is managed by the province. Most families have a smoking house or tent of some description in the vicinity of houses and cabins. Other bush production methods, such as tanning hides, tapping birch syrup, and collecting roots and medicinal plants, are now less common but are still in use among knowledgeable people.

Over the past decade or two, a shift has occurred from horse and canoe to motorboat or all-terrain-vehicle ('quad') for transportation in the bush. Correspondingly, since the 1970s, snowmobiles have taken the place of dog sleds, wagons, and sleighs as winter transportation for most. This entails a greater dependence on cash for gasoline and other capital items in traditional production. Nevertheless, some men hunt at least occasionally by foot, horse, or canoe. Another major focus of bush production is gathering firewood, as many householders attempt to minimize or avoid using the furnaces in their main residences. People rely on wood stoves as much as possible in community homes, as well as in the bush cabins where some spend weeks at a time.

Cree is heard everywhere in Trout and Peerless, and is the major public language in most contexts. Equally obvious is the status of Pentecostalism as the major public religion. The clear dominance of both in their spheres is attested by census data, which I discuss in chapters two and five. As I am devoting subsequent chapters to linguistic and religious situation, I will say no more on these subjects here. As to Trout Lake's Pentecostal majority (attested to by Canada 2001), this was a major drawing card for me initially but has turned out to be questionable. While they are important in local society, Pentecostals' majority status in Trout Lake is yet theoretical.

A word of context is appropriate on some of the more negative consequences of colonialism. While I was never victimized by crime or violence during my time in the north, this is not the case for everyone. The communities I have worked in are typically quiet friendly places; however, occasionally the legacy of isolation, poverty, and racism is manifested in anti-social behaviour. One night, in Cadotte Lake, a very drunk Cree man lit a Cree woman's car on fire in the parking lot of the complex for school employees, where we were staying. As I watched from my darkened living room, the man then stayed close by, shouting obscenities in Cree and English in the parking area for over an hour, until the RCMP arrived from Peace River to haul him away following a five-on-one takedown.

The increasing availability of alcohol during the postwar period has been a major factor in this crisis of crises. One man told me that his adult children's drinking was a chronic source of worry for him and his wife. Another more recent potential problem is the increasing availability of drugs; I once witnessed a bilingual conversation between two young men including an attempt to trade "a blast" ('a marihuana smoking session') for plumbing services. While cocaine and crystal meth are also available in the region, it appeared to me (based on conversations with community members, police, and educators) that these and other 'hard' drugs are not currently a major problem in the communities. On the other hand, there is definitely a problem with solvents and other alcohol substitutes. Jokes about community members (existing both within and outside of the community itself) attest to the discursive notoriety of this particular topic. Since I began my fieldwork, numerous deaths have occurred in Trout and Peerless, many of which are the result of suicide, substance abuse, or violence. Sometimes these deaths, particularly those involving vehicles, are characterized as "*accidents*."

One bad accident occurred in March, 1986, when four residents of Peerless Lake, members of the same extended family, died of methyl hydrate poisoning, from drinking photocopier fluid stolen from the Vocational Centre. Others who drank the fluid also suffered grave and long-term health problems. This tragedy attracted national attention and a large number of media people hung around for days. As a high school student, I had considered how my fellow Albertans might come to this. Since I began visiting the communities, numerous individuals have attempted to explain to me how "that bad accident" happened. Some implied that there could have been a safer or more normative way to consume such fluids, or other closely related fluids, as the partiers had apparently done so in the past. The problem of solvent abuse continues today, as some locals drink hairspray and other substances, especially to "cure" the "hangover" caused when alcohol runs out after a binge.

In seeing the problems caused by substance abuse in their communities, many locals understand it as the work of demons or spirits, including the "Suicide Spirit." All local religions use spiritual means to attempt to combat these social problems. Thus, my occasional discussion of crime, drinking, and other such phenomena is not a recapitulation of racist stereotypes, but is an integral part of a critical discourse analysis.

Preparations and permissions

As Trout and Peerless are off-reserve communities, there was no chief or band council to approach. Moreover, there was no member of the BCN council at Wabasca who was from these communities, or who explicitly represented them. While most of the residents are members of BCN, the governments that provided most services in the community were the province and its creations: the Municipal District (MD) of Opportunity, Northlands School District, and Aspen health board. Both Trout and Peerless have representatives on these organizations, including the MD council.

Trout and Peerless each also have limited autonomous government structures. These include local school communities as well as local community associations (not-for-profit societies with voluntary membership and limited staff). The associations provide some service such as a limited housing and training program. I found out that, as part of its ongoing land claim negotiations, BCN maintains a quasi-governmental consultation/negotiation structure: one "chief," two "councilors" and (during my fieldwork) a part-time clerk, in each community. These bodies are meant to function as government-in-waiting, for the time when Trout and Peerless will become a separate First Nation with a land base; however, the interim councils currently have little formal power in the communities. So there is a diffuse local governance structure, which is difficult for the outsider to approach. Fortunately most of these committees were somewhat interlocking, so I only had to secure the consent of a core group of politicians in both communities. This also reflects the small number of local people involved formally in political life.[13]

I began preparation for my research by contacting political figures in Trout Lake, Peerless Lake, and Wabasca. My advisor, Dr. Andie Palmer, provided me with funds to take some trips north (to Wabasca and Calling Lake initially) and conduct interviews. Her suggestion was that I do so in communities where I was hoping to do fieldwork. So in June, 2004, I obtained the permission of BCN Council to conduct research in its communities: the main community at Wabasca-Desmarais, and smaller communities at Trout, Peerless, Chipewyan, and Calling lakes.[14] Robert Moberly, a BCN staff member, provided me with an up-to-date list of community contacts, developed during land claim negotiations. A former chief of BCN, whom I had worked with, Mr. Melvin Beaver, also offered to speak on my behalf to community members; this was especially valuable given Mel's Pentecostal commitments, and I am grateful for his offer to intercede.

---

[13] Local people's participation in national and provincial politics is limited, as I found out from informal discussion with poll clerks at Trout Lake near the end of voting hours for the 2006 federal election. This voter apathy reflects the domination of political life by local elites (who are generally more integrated into larger-scale politics). Although the 2006 federal election featured multiple Aboriginal candidates at the riding level, including one running for an Aboriginal party, I noted little discussion of political issues and no electoral signs during the campaign. Even the key Christian electoral issue of the day (gay marriage) was never raised by any of my consultants (but see Laugrand and Oosten 2007 for an Inuit counter-example). Provincial politics are closer to home: during my 2005-8 fieldwork, in Cadotte, Trout, and Peerless, large signs supporting the former provincial Progressive Conservative cabinet minister Pearl Calahasen could be seen around the communities consistently; this was in spite of laws requiring their removal following the preceding elections. I also saw T-shirts emblazoned with "Pearl Our Girl" at a tea dance. Both the Lesser Slave Lake (including Trout, Peerless, and Cadotte) and Athabasca-Redwater (including Wabasca) ridings were represented by Aboriginal cabinet ministers during my major fieldwork, creating a conduit for local political leaders to voice their concerns (about road safety, for example) at the highest provincial levels. Even so, such brokered accommodation of Aboriginal leaders in these ridings did not extend to cabinet support for higher welfare rates, nor for a new highway to Trout, nor for First Nations attempting to charge an access fee to developers working on their traditional lands and to hold companies to environmental standards, nor (one might argue) to the speedier settlement of major land claims and attendant problems in the region.

[14] Although I have made research contacts in all these communities and visited each community, I have focused mainly on Trout and Peerless.

In September, 2004, Dr. Palmer provided me with the resources to make a short exploratory trip to Trout and Peerless. As well as renewing my acquaintance with Leo Alook (a local representative on the council for the Municipal District of Opportunity whom I had met at public meetings in 2000-2001, when he was President of the Trout Lake Community Association and I was a public servant), this visit also allowed me to meet Interim Chief (Peerless Lake) Andrew Orr, a community leader sitting on many local boards. Andrew supported my research and facilitated and translated for two interviews (with elders Louie J. Cardinal and Ida Houle). Both these elders also agreed that my study could be beneficial. I am still grateful for the early encouragement I received from Andrew, Ida, Leo, and Louie, and the later acceptance of these and other community members.[15] Andrew also assured me that elders would not expect to be paid in cash for their knowledge; just a gift would be appropriate. I remain particularly grateful for the generous participation of so many elders in my project.

My early discussions with Leo Alook, at Trout Lake, were also positive. When I told Leo about my plan to talk to elders about the old religion and lifestyle, he smiled and said: "I like that. People get confused about some white man asking questions. They might think you're a spy; but if someone asks why you're here, tell them to talk to me." Leo's offer to speak for me gave me peace of mind, even though I was never called upon to justify my presence in this way. Also, he and other members of his family (notably his wife, Lillian Alook) showed me hospitality and friendliness on numerous occasions during my visit.

---

[15] Ida soon introduced me to her son, William S. Houle (no relation to William Houle), who became an important collaborator in this study. William S. had previously worked as a translator and facilitator for Bigstone Cree Nation's traditional land use research project (Kituskeenow 1999).

I returned to Trout and Peerless in May and July, 2005, to meet other local politicians, including school board members, as well as attending a public meeting at Peerless. At this time, the assistance of James Alook (during my fieldwork, chair of the school committee and the community association at Peerless Lake) and Lillian Alook (Trout Lake school committee member) was crucial to obtaining broader support for my project. It was necessary to have school board support, as most of my contacts had agreed that the school controlled the only suitable accommodation available for our family.

I obtained initial community permissions by discussing my ethical approach to research as endorsed by the university (oral permission; no forms; individual must consent for use of their data; small gifts for interview subjects; payment for Cree lessons and translation; oversight of university research board), and my love of interviewing elders. I promised to share relevant research results, pending ethical consent, and to assist in community projects where possible. In the end, I advised community groups on a few occasions, sought partnerships and fund-raising opportunities, and wrote two grant proposals on behalf of the community associations in Trout and Peerless. I hope that my research will also benefit their ongoing traditional land use mapping research.

Having secured agreement from public figures in both Trout and Peerless to pursue my research, it was only a matter of waiting for the Northlands School Board proper to make a decision about accommodation. In the end, the school board bureaucracy at Peace River was able to secure me a 20-year old, 1200 sq. ft., three-bedroom trailer at Trout Lake. The collaboration and support of Norman Gladue, Lillian Alook, and other local school community officials was instrumental in securing this accommodation. I lived in this structure from August, 2005, until May, 2006, having resided in Cadotte Lake for most of the May-July, 2005, period.[16]

With the exception of a mouse infestation or two, the trailer turned out to be perfect for our needs, as it was closely located to the lake and the centre of the community. The trailer provided a view over a steep bank to the Trout River just below its mouth: a broad fast shallow stretch near a foot-bridge at a ford, where vehicles of all sizes and descriptions cross the river. This location was fortuitous for the many opportunities it afforded to meet people, watch subsistence practice, and view wildlife. The trailer was near the site of the original Catholic mission, and also close to the old HBC post (the present mission site). The missions and post were in turn located near an older camping area and ceremonial site, where "Tea Dances" and "Lame Dances" had been held, as was the practice at summer gathering sites. All this attention was due to the site's status as a focal point of human activity in the region, because of the spawning runs, which occur in the Trout River periodically throughout the period of open water. Particularly in the late fall, I spent many hours, day and night, watching and chatting with people of all ages; my interlocutors were fishing with a range of tools and tactics.

Such was the significance of the autumn whitefish run that I had been told about

it, with anticipatory glee, twice within a week of my arrival at Trout. One young man stated: "They're (*i.e.,* the whitefish) going to be stacked (*i.e.,* in the water); kids, dogs, eagles, everything: pulling out fish." Those I met and spoke to at the fishing site and elsewhere on the land reminded me of the embeddedness of the people in the landscape.

---

[16] Including follow-up and preparatory visits, as well as two months MES fieldwork in Cadotte in 1996, I have conducted approximately 14 months of fieldwork with Cree people.

Figure Three: The Trout River at Trout Lake Proper

It was also at this site, during the whitefish run, that "Rene" told me about one rumour going around Trout: that I was a detective come to investigate a cold murder case. When I asked him why they would send a bookish white man to do undercover work in a Cree-speaking community, he admitted I had a point. Rene was one of the traditionally oriented non-Pentecostals who took a critical interest in my research. "Throwing away their Cree, is what they're doing," he stated, regarding Pentecostals, thus bifurcating the community at least on a symbolic level (*cf.* Walter Whitehead, quoted in Martin-Hill 2008:116). My discussion of the detective story, and of Rene's reaction to Pentecostalism, brings to mind both the difficulties in achieving informed consent on a community level, or in writing anything like a definitive account of Trout Lake and its diverse people.

One assistant pastor allowed me to record him in church, and agreed to speak with me on the telephone about his beliefs. Yet this man declined to translate for me in my interviews with a member of his household, or be interviewed formally. One might say that he agreed to collaborate in my study on a partial or differential basis, with personal and family discourse privileged in privacy over public or church discourse. The man gave as a reason for declining an interview that other parties integrally involved in his life story, and his salvation, might not want their information shared. This exemplifies the composite Cree view of the self, as discussed by Nadia Ferrara (2004), who applies A. Irving Hallowell's groundbreaking 1955 research on the behavioral environment of the (Ojibwa) self, which integrated psychological and environmental approaches. While consistent with a large body of literature on the self that uses Hallowell's work as a departure, Ferrara also adds an innovation of her own: that of the "composite" Cree self. The composite Cree self consists of "the individual autonomous self, the self-in-nature (i.e. the bush), and the self-in-the-collective (i.e. the community)" (Ferrara 2004:3). Such complex analyses highlight the potential problems of achieving informed consent of relevant parties, even among human persons.

Leo Alook later told me that once in Trout, several years before my arrival, "They had a meeting and somebody told the people not to talk to a white man." Leo then stated that the unprecedented (for a researcher) length of my stay in the community was steadily augmenting many people's comfort with my presence. Even so, Leo's meeting, like Rene's detective story, underlines the power dichotomy inherent in my presence in the community as an academic or a man of leisure (although many community members had incomes and capital vastly exceeding mine). As Laura Graham (2006:5) states, anthropologists are inevitably apprehended, by less privileged subjects, within networks of power. I was reminded of this each time I pulled out an expensive researcher's toy such as a laptop or digital recorder. Accordingly, I tried to use such accoutrements subtly and only when necessary. This had drawbacks, specifically in terms of reducing recording quality (since I was not using a large external mike) and photo quality (since I did not get up and move around the church to obtain optimum photos). Still, I believe it improved collaborators' comfort level, without violating the ethical requirement of informed consent.

In any case, I was successful in obtaining collaboration from a number of people, who became interested in my project. While some of my consultants were leaders in the local church hierarchy or in the political life of the communities, others were not connected with (or were ambiguously linked to) church institutional structures. This lends diversity to my data, as many collaborators had different views on several questions facing the communities.

Permissions from individuals to use their data arose in a range of circumstances: public meetings, church services, formal interviews; shared company. In the case of formal interviews, I made efforts to arrange these in advance; often, however, I simply visited people, as was customary. I sometimes did so with another community member, who could translate and facilitate when necessary. Where a person's name is used or where a person is quoted directly in this thesis, I have done so by permission. I also have repeatedly contacted many of these and other collaborators by phone and/or on follow-up visits (August 2006, May 2007, April 2008[17]) to confirm the data, return interview transcripts, etc. In some instances, following Susan Harding's insight (2000) that pastors are public figures with potential to strategically engage the researcher, I have not subjected the public speech of pastors to such follow-through. Nevertheless, all local pastors agreed to participate in some aspects of my study.

The predominance of many non-smoking Pentecostals in the communities, including among elders, made it difficult to assess proper interview protocol. This protocol difficulty required me to reject the insights of many "Aboriginal awareness" sessions I had attended, where tobacco gifting is emphasized. In cases where I knew someone to be either a smoker or a ceremonialist, I brought a gift of cigarettes and/or tobacco. In most other cases, I gave consultants a pound of coffee and perhaps some baking or fruit.[18] In cases where it was necessary to use an interpreter (the majority of times when interviewing someone aged over 65), I generally paid the interpreter. I worked formally with four different interpreters (three men and one woman; one man is from Trout Lake, the rest are from Peerless), all of whom also became important consultants in their own right. Numerous individuals also provided informal verbal translation for my understanding on different occasions, including in church.

Although formal interviews, church attendance, language study and translation were important to my research, some of the most educational moments of my fieldwork occurred in one-on-one situations with persons I had known and grown to trust before that particular encounter. This is one of the strengths of long-term fieldwork. Still, the dynamic nature of fieldwork entails relations with the community as a whole, not just with selected consultants. In less scripted, more public moments, I received both accolades and insights, but also passive and active rejections of my project and my presence in the community.

---

[17] On follow-up trips I returned and discussed transcribed interviews, visited with collaborators, and conducted some translation work. Since leaving the field, I have also spoken on the phone on several occasions with a handful of key contacts. In 2008, I gave thesis drafts to six local collaborators.

[18] In one case, I received misinformation and gave cigarettes to George Auger, a non-smoker aged over 70, who, upon receiving the cigarettes, said in Cree to the interpreter, William S. Houle: "I don't know what he's here to ask me but tell him I'm not an old man." This suggests that even non-smoking members of predominantly Pentecostal families are aware of the conventions regarding asking "old men" for information, and of the special powers and knowledge of certain "old men."

Many members of the church and community came to see that my research, to quote a backhanded compliment I received from Edward Noskiye, a church leader, "could be *fairly* interesting." So I would like to thank and acknowledge all members of the community for their indulgence. My hope is to repay in some way both the church and the broader community for their support, by sharing my data as widely among community institutions as individual permissions allow.

It will be clear to the reader that the majority of my consultants are male. This is unavoidable when working as a man in a fairly closed, relatively patriarchal, community. Many women, particularly older women, may feel restricted by speech norms from leading a discussion with a non-related male.[19] This was somewhat compensated for by the relatively close relationships that my wife, Laura, and I developed with a small number of women (albeit mostly women my age (mid-thirties) or younger), who were highly valued consultants and acquaintances. However, I sensed normative restraints against my spending too much time with these younger women, as well. In some cases, visiting with my wife or son was a means to build rapport with women and other members of the community.

I encountered many women who were "too busy" to talk with me, although they had been recommended by others as authoritative voices on topics of interest. While I sought formal interviews with women on several occasions in Trout/Peerless, in general these requests were rebuffed. On the small number of occasions when an individual woman in Trout or Peerless agreed to be interviewed, each declined to have the conversation recorded (as men rarely did).

---

[19] See Chapter Two for a discussion of the breach of these norms in some Pentecostal practices.

While interviewing unilingual elder couples (invariably with a male interpreter), I would try to bring in the woman's voice. In each case, each of the other parties to the discourse (the male "subject" of the interview, his wife, and the interpreter) resisted my attempts to a greater or lesser extent. In one instance, where I contrived to have the interpreter ask a question directly to a woman about women's lives in the bush, the elder waited for her husband to answer the question on her behalf (as he was happy to do for her). One exception to this was Mrs. Sarah Sinclair, who offered a number of thoughtful insights, and led a multi-party discussion of family genealogy and bush life. Other woman elders also influenced their family members' discourses in subtle ways and with brief interjections. In general, older people observe the norm explained to me by Janet: that the man is to be the spokesperson for the household. This norm causes friction among some younger couples insofar as it is still observed today.

My experience obtaining permissions for research confirms that it is still possible for ethnographers to build effective research relationships in Aboriginal communities, in spite of the alleged concerns about Natives being "researched to death." As another example, Susan Gray (2006:xxi) suggests that very few people in Berens River, MB, are aware of the groundbreaking anthropological research that Irving Hallowell (1955; 1942) conducted there in the 1930s. As a result, people there are not combative towards Hallowell's legacy or towards anthropologists in general. Rather, Gray's potential collaborators evaluated their participation in her project on its own merits. In keeping with this example, I found that most people in Trout, Peerless, and Cadotte had little experience with, and few established preconceptions about, academic researchers.

Some people, who had spent time in communities such as Little Buffalo, John D'Or Prairie, and Garden River, were familiar with researchers; however, Trout and Peerless have not been a focus of research to such a great extent. Most people adapted quickly enough. More than one close acquaintance referred to me as his "partner," or invited me to participate in an activity they thought somebody "fascinated" by Indians would enjoy. Others were pleased to have occasional company, assistance with labour, someone to talk with in the bush, or a lift down the road. With a handful of close acquaintances, relations became quite easy and pleasant. Most local people accepted my interests and behaviour as just one more example of the strangeness of outsiders.

I did not secure permission from any church leaders for that aspect of my research, until I had arrived in the community. It was not possible for me to determine who might be the relevant church authorities during my brief preparatory visits. As it turned out, gaining church permission was relatively easy. This may have been because pastors, evangelists, and lay church leaders are represented at most levels of the political executive in both communities.

During a visit to a garage sale[20] with Laura and two of our teacher neighbours, I became acquainted with Isabelle Houle, wife of Pastor Emile Houle and daughter of the late John P. Cardinal (a prominent early evangelist). She invited me to attend church, commenting on the beautiful Cree singing of some community members. The next day, at a public event (a community feast), I met John P., himself. When William Houle called upon John P. to say the opening prayer at this feast, William introduced him as "our Elder, Brother John." Later, I discussed my project with John P.; he seemed interested, encouraging me to visit him and to attend church (I did both). At the same event, Trout Lake Interim Chief (and Pentecostal church member) Norman Gladue told me I was welcome to attend any public event in the community, including church.

---

[20] Redistributive events such as this are relatively common and are organized either privately (in-home) or publicly (occurring at the community hall or similar venue).

Within two weeks of my arrival, I had become acquainted with the family of Johnny Noskiye. Johnny is Pastor of the log church in Trout Lake, formally called "Faith in God's Temple." With his teenaged grandson interpreting[21] and bear meat smoking fragrantly nearby, Johnny said it would be good if I came to church: "It's for everyone," he stated. Permissions for other aspects of my church research came in stages, as I developed the parameters for the project. For instance, I did not take notes at the first service I attended, so as to familiarize core church members with my presence before beginning active research. I was given public permission, by Assistant Pastor Emile Houle, to take notes and photos at the second service I attended. Separately, I also received permission from pastors to record their discourse, and to approach individual members for permissions to record their own testimonies in church.

Having begun to attend "Johnny's church," I quickly made contact with other leaders of the Pentecostal movement, including cousins Joe and Jack Okemow (two pastors, of different churches, from Peerless Lake). I was welcomed, by Pastor Jack Okemow, to attend and record in services at Potter's House church (no longer active), in

---

[21] I spoke with Johnny often and exchanged pleasantries in Cree, but generally had to rely on interpreters for actual conversation. His grandson, who was not from Trout Lake and who claimed to be an unexceptional Cree speaker for his age, was just one of many able Cree speakers and translators among the high school population.

Peerless Lake. I recorded Jack himself, speaking in both Peerless and Trout Lake churches; I also recorded other individuals (mainly people from Trout Lake, who were also active in church there) speaking at Potter's House.[22] Although I asked to conduct research at Peerless Lake's Faith Centre, Pastor Joe Okemow never granted permission for this, citing the need for support from his church board. Joe did grant me an interview and invited me to attend church without recording or taking notes.[23] I have also been invited to attend church at Cadotte, Little Buffalo, and Loon lakes, although I have never actually done so. Leaders frequently referred to me in church so that all regular attendees (including some visiting from other communities) would be aware of my project.

So it was that I came to conduct most of my fieldwork on ritual at Faith in God's Temple, in Trout Lake. As services in Trout were more convenient, more frequent, and better attended than those at Potter's House, I made the decision to focus my research there. With the exception of a handful of visits to Potter's House, one trip to a tent meeting held at Trout Lake Narrows (also a cemetery and former ceremonial site), and some attendance at wakes and funerals (which, like the April 2008 William Houle memorial services, were held at community halls), all my detailed local Pentecostal ritual information come from my experiences in this church at Trout Lake. As Faith in

---

[22] The extent to which I was able to record several of the same individuals, speaking in different churches, shows the integration and mutual interdependence of the core churchgoing groups in both communities. One woman alluded to this when she stated in church her love of each local church and pastor: "I want to give thanks for Faith in God's Temple, Faith Centre, and Pastor Jack."

[23] When I made two attempts to do so, at the appointed times, I found Faith Centre locked up, the parking lot empty. Multiple individuals (including Joe himself) mentioned to me that church services were rarely held at Faith Centre during my fieldwork, as Joe was very busy managing his oilfield service company. In our January, 2008, phone call, Joe again mentioned his work as the reason for canceling services. He stated that it is necessary for him to work to keep the church running, since the congregation is not self-sustaining financially. During my follow-up visit in April, 2008, consultants stated that the church had held few meetings that winter, due in part to heating problems, underlining the marginal financial/capital holdings of many local congregations. Much of Joe's ministry now involves traveling to other centres, such as Loon Lake, High Prairie, and Manitoba. He is also active in visiting Trout Lake for church. He informed me that regular services for up to 30-50 people are being held at the centre on an ongoing basis.

God's Temple generally held at least two services (Sunday afternoon and Wednesday evening) per week, each of which regularly exceeded 3-4 hours in length, there was ample opportunity for my participation, analysis, and recording.

Later on, as I began to get to know several church members, I discussed my project with them individually and, in many cases, obtained permission to record their testimonies and music for subsequent use as data. Many consultants, who likely would not have agreed to an interview, were pleased to share their testimony in recorded form. In the case of pastors, I would usually ask them in church, prior to services, for their permission to record their speech. In the case of non-leaders, I did not ask them during worship or within the church. Rather, I became familiar through repeated attendance with the people who made frequent testimonies, and contacted a number of these people at other times (or, in one or two cases, just outside the church prior to the beginning of a service), to obtain advance permission to record their subsequent church testimonies and songs. Often, it was through interviewing a unilingual elder about their life story that I was able to obtain permission for church recording, having created some rapport in being there with a known translator/facilitator.

Most people in the congregation did not object to my wanting to live in their community, or conduct research in their churches. Many believed that God had sent me for a reason, which could involve my conversion and/or my subsequent dissemination of their message, thus helping to fulfill Jesus' command to them. One leader repeatedly stated his belief in church that people did not choose to attend the church but were appointed by God to do so. Presumably this applied to me as well.

As Assistant Pastor Emile Houle stated in church: "I thank God for you, Clint, that you come to our church all the time. You're going to go back and tell them that God is doing something here." Assistant Pastor Peter Thunder also commented in church, along similar lines, early in our acquaintance:

> Thank God for that one in the back, that môniyâw writing a book about the community. He wants to know. I've talked to him a few times, and it's going to be a blessing, his book.

These utterances suggest that church leaders perceived considerable potential benefits arising out of the increased publicity I could give for their activities.

As well as seeing the instrumental value of my research, pastors and others also expressed a concern for my salvation. On my May, 2007, follow-up visit to the church, Emile acknowledged me in English, while speaking mainly in Cree from the pulpit: "Clint, the *wise man,* is here." Emile's utterance is meaningful on several levels: as a pun on my surname; as a heartfelt recognition of my research efforts; as an ironic statement exemplifying the trope (that I shall explore in chapters five and six) of the learned intellectual who is not smart enough to find God. Emile then switched to Cree: "It's not very often that a white man comes to our meetings. So maybe God is moving in his soul too" (translation: Ray G. Thunderchild).

The belief that God was moving in my research was also present among lay people or non-leaders. As William Auger stated:

> It blessed me when you came to talk to me. I had been feeling blue but God did something for me. There must be some reason that you're going to church. You're waiting for God to give you a message. Everyone has to come to God in his own way.

Also providing an example of my being "given" a story (which I had not sought or received advance permission to record, and therefore did not do so) in church was one very personal and emotional testimony that a young man gave about his suicide attempt, while I was in the congregation. As he showed the bullet's entry and exit scars on his torso, he acknowledged that most of those present had heard his story before, and stated:

> I'm telling this story for my brother (gestures to me) because I believe he's going to do something with it.

These utterances provide some context for understanding how I was welcomed for a time into this community; because my presence there had been ordained by God and, moreover, could help them spread their word.

I was recently able to fulfill this charge, to spread the word, by giving an interview about my research and the churches I studied, for the magazine, *Christian Week*, a national, Evangelical-oriented, publication (Stephen 2006). How did the magazine's Alberta correspondent find out about this research? Maybe God guided her to my U of A website! While I was concerned about some mischaracterizations and misquotes in this article, these doubts were mitigated somewhat when I was able to share the article with my collaborators, who expressed considerable interest in it.

Moving beyond Pentecostal worship, I also gained permission from Fr. Paul Hernou to attend services at Kateri Mission (formerly Mission Ste. Thérèse) in Trout Lake, with the understanding that this would be part of my research. I did not take notes or record goings-on in the Catholic services, although I did have some interviews and contacts with church members. Later, through Fr. Paul's assistance, I gained permission from Fr. Garry LaBoucane and Ms. Marlene Morin, to conduct participant observation and interview research at the Lac Ste. Anne Pilgrimage (2006-2008).[24] As well as formal permission to attend public meetings and Catholic or Protestant worship, I also have gained access to a number of traditional Cree ceremonies in other communities, including pipe ceremonies, sweat lodge, and tea dances.

---

[24] Evangelist William Houle informed me the pilgrimage at Lac Ste Anne was "for all Christianity." Maire Anderson-McLean also confirms the presence of Pentecostals, among others, at this pilgrimage (1999:21).

The work of anthropology

The central feature of my life during my fieldwork was my continued family and spousal obligations. Because I moved north with my wife, Laura, and young son, Thomas, my activities were constrained in certain respects. This created advantages as well as disadvantages. For one thing, we were limited to seeking accommodation in a single-family dwelling, resulting in a certain degree of structural integration into the architecture of outside agencies (we lived in teacher housing both at Trout and Cadotte). However, proximity to the school and its open grassy field was beneficial for our son. As well, we quickly became acquainted with many of the local people employed at the school and enjoyed the easy conviviality of children, horses, and dogs.

To give herself a focus Laura volunteered for most of our stay for 4 mornings per week as a teacher's aide with grade 5-6 students, and occasionally served as a substitute teacher. Through this experience we became more acquainted with some students' families, being invited to their homes in two cases. Laura's teaching meant that I had childcare duties and rarely made plans before 12 or 1 pm. This delay often fit local schedules just fine, although it occasionally resulted in my missing opportunities to go to the bush or spend time with consultants.

In many respects this period was a most pleasant one for us to focus on our son. We passed time by walking, cross-country skiing, and some canoeing. Throughout our stay, we walked as a family for exercise, leisure, and practicality, and so were highly visible members of the community. I soon observed that (except for some youths, elders, and children) most community members would go to great lengths to avoid walking in the community, even though many were fit and capable of walking long distances when necessary.[25] Thus, walking (let alone skiing) marked us as extraordinary and possibly of questionable judgment. Upon arriving at a collaborator's home, I was frequently greeted with an incredulous, "You came *walking*?" leading me to conclude that this activity is somewhat noteworthy.

In any event, walking afforded us many opportunities to see and meet people of all ages and walks of life in the community. Often we would speak with people working in the area outside their homes, driving, riding horses or quads. We also participated as a family in community activities such as feasts, birthday parties, office lunches (at Cadotte), treaty days, sports, rummage sales, job fairs, and school events. This ensured, not so much that we were accepted into the community as friends, but that most people in the communities (as well as many from other nearby communities) were aware of our presence there. I found my age, family status, and increased personal confidence in 2005-8, relative to 1996, were great assets in establishing rapport, particularly with older males. This reflects the status of field research as a positioned, gendered, privileged undertaking.

I was fortunate to arrive in the community knowing a few people from previous visits. We were also fortunate to arrive in late summer, a time when a relatively large number of community events are held. Within days of our arrival, we attended two community "Treaty Day" celebrations. These events enabled me to meet many people (including Janet Netowastenum) who would later become friends or close acquaintances. We also attended a community feast (for the birthdays of two teens) within weeks of our arrival.

---

[25] I believe that this relates to a perceived status distinction: between successful, sober, people, and those who must resort to "walking down the road." "Walking down the road" was explicitly associated with alcoholism in multiple discourses. Similarly, on the rare occasions I noticed hitchhikers (whom I invariably picked up) standing on the road between Trout and Peerless, it was generally apparent that a recent or anticipatory drinking binge was a major factor in their impending journey. At the very least, walking may mean that one is looking for a ride and does not have a vehicle, a somewhat marginalizing situation in a semi-remote community.

I received a lot of exposure when I attended a public meeting on land claims issues at Trout. At this meeting were many people from Trout, Peerless, Calling, and Chipewyan lakes, political leaders from Wabasca (BCN), lawyers, and government representatives. Seeing that the meeting was mainly held in Cree, with perfunctory English-Cree interpretation for the remarks of outsiders, and seeing a number of unilingual elders present, I resolved to make a speech in Cree. I was able to do so, no doubt with a few errors and strong tendency towards a formal, Plains Cree usage, to underline that I was not a lawyer or bureaucrat, like the people I was sitting with, but rather a student who wanted to speak to elders and to learn how people live. This speech was generally well received and afforded me an introduction to numerous new people, while conveying upon me some of the legitimacy of Trout Lake's Interim Chief, Norman Gladue. Norman had publicly invited me to speak and offered to translate my remarks (assuming I would speak in English).

During the second month of my residence, the community suffered the violent loss of a young father, whom I had spoken with on one or two occasions. As well as attending the wake, I tried to help out with the work of his funeral and burial. Notably, this included spending several hours, over two days, digging a grave in the company of several other men, two of whom became friends. Similarly, as the months progressed, I met more people simply by picking up mail, taking my son to the playground, attending meetings, etc. I also tried to maintain close relations with the political and church figures who had spoken for me, but these individuals were often quite busy.

I would speak frankly with anyone who expressed interest about why I was in Trout Lake. I believe that many people sought me out, to tell me things and get to know my family. Whenever I had a warm interaction with a person, I would try to phone or visit them subsequently. Also, once or more per week for much of my stay, I took Cree lessons from Peerless Lake Cree Teacher, Hilda Cardinal, or sat in on her Cree 10 class. While I was in Peerless, I usually tried to visit more than one person there on each trip.

Figure Four: Jake Skinning Beaver, Trout Lake

On multiple occasions, I was invited by different people to travel into the bush for a day, a night, or more. I continue to receive these invitations and hope to be able to accept more of them in the future. During my fieldwork, while hunting with collaborators, we traveled by a wide range of vehicles: quad, 4 x 4, snowmobile, and horse-drawn wagon. The people I accompanied on these trips successfully harvested beaver, muskrat, fisher, marten, squirrel, duck, and several species of fish. Moreover, each trip bore the potential of harvesting, or learning the habits of, bigger game animals.

Being on the land (or on the ice) and in camps was an invaluable research experience, for gaining some understanding of the moods and discourses traditional practices brought on. I will never forget the experience of kneeling on the windy ice sheet of Trout Lake, reaching my hand beneath the ice into the lake to help adjust a net, or pulling rapidly freezing fish out of the frozen filaments of said net with cold, clumsy fingers. The world seemed to expand as the dark tree line of the horizon, and the other fishing parties moving across the lake, looked very far away indeed. At times like this I noticed the physical toughness and mental focus of the men and women I was traveling or working with, as well as their ability to withstand cold and work with little complaint, in spite of their not having the high-tech outdoor gear I was wearing. Rather, most people wore the type of workingman's gear I recognized from my father's closet. Breaks during outdoor activities brought chances to sit by a fire (invariably assembled and ignited with astonishing rapidity, even in the snow) or stove to eat, drink tea, perhaps smoke, and talk.

I frequently participated in various labours ancillary to bush production. This included helping build a wooden "crib" frame around a cabin's base and shoveling insulating earth into it, stacking and hauling wood and hay, building a corral fence, and scavenging for car parts. It is noteworthy that, in most cases, was this not the first time I had undertaken such tasks. John Jim Houle called me "a good worker," and commented that it must be my farm background, which many local men seemed to view favourably.

Throughout my fieldwork, doctoral studies, and prior employment, I have had dozens of informative and enjoyable interactions with many Aboriginal people from around northern Alberta and beyond, which may inform this work in some small way. Of course, my core group of consultants was smaller and more localized than this. I conducted formal interviews with over 20 inhabitants of Trout and Peerless, the vast majority of which I recorded. Perhaps 10 or 12 people (generally not included among the previous 20 interview subjects) became key contacts, whom I visited regularly. Some of these 10 or 12 are scarcely quoted or mentioned in this thesis, while others collaborated in several aspects of research and are acknowledged accordingly.

My foremost research method was participant observation and shared access to public symbols: in church, but t also in the broader community. Participant observation is the core method of anthropological fieldwork, allowing one to apprehend speech and symbols in social context. Throughout my fieldwork I was struck with the interconnectedness of many aspects of life in Trout: religion, land, labour, family life, all tied up in discourse. I frequently gained insights of a religious nature from companions in unusual circumstances, such as office lunches, meetings, and road trips.

A brief example of such discourse will demonstrate the interconnectedness of key concepts and symbols. As Joseph Cardinal said of his trapline while we were driving around it: "*manâcihtâ*: You look after it. You take care of it. It's like the way you treat your vehicle. You're not just going to run it all over the place with no maintenance." I had asked Joseph to give a word describing the relationship of trappers to their land. Joseph then discussed the changes on his trapline (from the dogsled days of the early 1970s, to the current crisscross of roads and seismic lines, including long-term camp accommodation for workers) as seeming strange: "like a dream." Following this discussion, we drove to the aforementioned camp complex to order a coffee, and Joseph politely informed the camp boss as to whose land we were on.

While not religious on first appearance, this type of contemporary discourse draws heavily on traditional Cree beliefs and teachings, which are not separable from the spiritual aspects of life. In fact, *manâcihtâ* is also a religious referent, being used both in traditionalist and Christian ceremonies. Cree Instructor Marjorie Memnook stated that *manâcihtâ* implies that something is God-given, whether it applies to the land or to religious experience as such (Personal Communication. April 2, 2008). This suggests that Cree symbolic ideology, animated by religious or spiritual beliefs or teachings, is resilient and omnipresent, appearing in conversations with no ostensibly "religious" content.

Other research methods I used were recorded interviews (mainly with elders and/or church leaders, nearly all of whom were male) and unrecorded interviews (mainly with women). Regna Darnell (1991:99) asserts that it is appropriate to use questions and discourse (as well as the standard Cree pedagogical technique of observation and imitation) to learn from elders about religious beliefs and practice, provided that the learner approaches the teacher with respect. Speech data, in the form of the words of a respected teacher, assist many Cree people in accessing the incomprehensible. Thus it is culturally appropriate for me also to attempt to learn in this manner. Indeed, through modifying the protocols developed by Brian Calliou (2004) and others for Aboriginal oral history research, I found I was often able to count on the enthusiastic cooperation of elders.

For many of my interviews, I employed translators, each of whom played a vital role in establishing rapport with interview subjects. In instances where I have used field translation, I have generally not provided a Cree transcription, but an English transcription of the translators' remarks. This was done due to the resource-intensive nature of transcription, and my desire to use correct Cree in writing to the extent possible. In some instances I provide close transcription and translation of utterances recorded in church (a prayer by Joe Trindle and a narrative by Solomon Noskiye); these represent a significant contribution in collaboration with Ray G. Thunderchild and Dorothy Thunder. When I have suggested undertaking such close transcription and translation of the original Cree text from my elders' interviews, both Ray and Dorothy encouraged me try other approaches, and to rely on the local knowledge of the field translators who had been present at the interview. Ray and Peter Thunder have also provided summary (not word for word) translations of recorded church discourse.

I found that many interview subjects were glad to share information with me, particularly since I had committed to share edited interview transcripts with local government and schools. Most people discussed the local history of religion with interest, whatever their personal views on the matter. Moreover, it is through interviews with elders that I was able to fit the documentary history of mission activity into the lived history of local people. Such interviews proved essential in contextualizing religious currents in the 20th century. Therefore, in spite of Alessandro Duranti's (1997:103) characterization that interviews do not provide useful data of linguistic phenomena *per se* (because they are not considered as naturally occurring discourses), I have found that interviews were very useful teaching tools for my consultants, in their efforts to help me understand and to model Cree and Christian principles of correct discourse. Cree and Christian narrative are embedded within my interview subjects' answers to my questions.

In light of this dynamic, I follow Charlotte Linde's observation:

> It is a mistake to try to make a sharp distinction between the interview situation and so-called real life, or between the interview situation and noncontrived social interaction. The interview is part of real life too (1993:59-60).

Indeed, there may be some potential for generic dissonance, as what I think should be an interview (implicitly directed by me) turns out for my consultant or translator to be an opportunity for "witnessing" or explaining their faith (*cf.* Harding 2000:37-38). I encountered this approach to the interview on numerous occasions, as I have already alluded.

Interviews also proved essential in isolating key units of discourse, which have different meanings in different contexts (for instance, words that are used both in traditional and Pentecostal rituals), and querying the meanings of these units in ways that would not have been possible in more spontaneous settings. This provided further means for one my most important research methods: discourse analysis.

Discourse analysis refers to analysis of language in use, taking into account the political, economic, and geographic aspects of language and social life. Discourse is a co-created, eminently observable, phenomenon, the analysis of which can help us to understand the dynamic linkages of religion and language in constructing social life over time (Bourdieu 1982:16). My main approach to discourse analysis is through the ethnography of communication, an anthropological approach to the study of discourse, pioneered by John J. Gumperz and Dell Hymes (*e.g.,* 1964). This approach is closely related to methods analyzing discourse, performance, and ethnopoetics (Finnegan 1992:42), as well as oral history (Tedlock 1983:100). My graduate training in these research methods supports this thesis.

Ethnographers of communication call for an emphasis on the goals and values of the speech community, as a site of organized diversity, where speech resources are distributed differentially (Bauman and Sherzer 1974:6). Speech is always situated within native contexts and interpretive norms such as genre, which are defined socially. Performance is the nexus of social situation and individual creativity (*ibid*:7); social life is created flexibly through performance (*ibid*:8). The focus on performance suggests an improvisational opportunity within a generic structure. This allows me to make an analogy between individual speakers testifying in church, and an ideal/typical Cree Pentecostal, seeking to live out Creeness in a new institutional context. As such, performance may be understood as a public act, or an approach to life. Analysts must look at how people creatively take advantage of conventionally available speech events and genres to look at people's goals and values, on individual and social levels. This is the ultimate goal of my study of Cree Pentecostal discourse.

I undertook discourse analysis both through elicitation of speech data from language tutors, and also from recording or field transcription of spontaneous speech in public or interview settings. One aspect of discourse, which I was less prepared to consider, is the embodied nature of communication and religious experience. While my notes do attend to kinesics and proxemics, I only made limited use of photos and video in church. As such I have not placed a major analytical emphasis on this facet of communication.

Another method that has been vital is archival research. This method has contributed a multi-vocalic component to the study, as I draw on multiple archives (including transcriptions of interviews with late elders), secondary sources, and my own primary data somewhat interchangeably. Jean DeBernardi advocates studying the total field of action of a religious movement, including missionaries and links between periphery and metropolis (2004). Missionary records provide a vital source of such historical data.

Turning to church-based participant observation, I estimate that I attended more than 30 Pentecostal worship services during my 2005-6 fieldwork in Trout Lake and Peerless Lake, in addition to funerals, wakes, meetings, and feasts that also featured ritual or prayerful elements of Pentecostal practice. I also attended a church service (and assisted three other men in erecting a tent for planned outdoor services) during a spring, 2007, follow-up visit, and another (in memory of William Houle) during a spring 2008, follow-up visit. Altogether I estimate that I have completed well over 100 hours of fieldwork on ritual in this manner. During this part of fieldwork I watched, listened, recorded more than 12 hours of discourse, took a few photos inside and outside church, examined texts such as Cree bibles and hymnals, spoke briefly with other congregants, and kept notes as closely as possible. Above all, I tried to observe unobtrusively and participate as much as was feasible (that is, I generally sang when I knew the words, bowed my head when people prayed aloud, stood when others stood, and sat when others sat). During funerals, wakes, and other public meetings (outside of formal church services), I generally made notes after the event. I did not make efforts to "interview" people during any service. My recollection and representation of some of this field data on ritual forms the basis of church data presented in this thesis.

Using various methods and voices, my research asks basic questions about the nature of understanding and interpretation in the context of linguistic and cultural anthropology. The importance of hermeneutics (*cf.* Dilthey and Rickman 1976), or interpretation, to the human sciences remains compelling, given the post-modern crisis of representation (*cf.* Taylor 1985a; 1985b).

Waugh has noted specifically the necessity of a hermeneutic approach to the study of Cree religion in northern Alberta:

> The hermeneutic problem is not one of trying and rejecting various methods in getting to know the other. The essential issue is that we have no direct way of engaging being, that is the central core of the object we wish to know (Waugh 1996:282).

Similarly, as Linde states, "literary theory has, at this point, entirely exploded the possibility or even the desirability of arriving at an interpretation that can be said to be the author's intended meaning" (1993:96). Nevertheless, with Linde, I assert that speech events and stories of personal experience are the best research site to study human beliefs and values. Linde's definition of the hermeneutic circle (or paradox) is that the interpreter must have some pre-understanding of text, but is also at the mercy of language processes and translation difficulty, so cannot form a final understanding. To confess then, my ultimate method is that of writing itself, undertaking an interpretive stance and attempting to do justice to the knowledge of those with whom I have collaborated, and to allow some divergent voices to be heard in a fresh context.

Chapter Two: Cree language and Pentecostal discourse

The status of Cree as the main religious language of Trout Lake's Pentecostal and Catholic congregations is an important feature of the language's vitality in the region (*cf.* Fishman 2006). The predominance of Cree in many aspects of church life, may be a strategic response to the exclusion of Cree from other spheres, such as school. As a church language, Cree is spoken and attended to in public, learned by outsiders (*i.e.,* missionaries and researchers), and has a broad written corpus. Since many key elders are unilingual Cree speakers and several adults are literate in Cree, services are mainly in that language. This reinforces existing community speech norms favouring the use of Cree among adults in most settings. Thus, the utterances and texts I discuss in this dissertation make use of codes that are meaningful to community members, including: speech and silence; musical and non-musical; Cree and English; written and oral text; (written Cree) syllabics and Roman orthography; holy language and secular language. Different members of the community have access to differential levels of competence, as performers and audience members, with these sets of codes.

With so many codes available, interpretation becomes a highly valued skill. Several people suggested to me that pastors would make the best Cree interpreters for my research project, because pastors have more experience with translating ideas and words (*cf.* Samuels 2006). I once witnessed Assistant Pastor Emile Houle translate for over an hour for a visiting pastor, seemingly with verve, ease, and style; this included translating arcane biblical quotes into Cree, off the cuff. The main task of the religious leader appears to be that of a spokesperson: the pastor interprets both lexical and thematic elements of bible readings, for instance. Often, a pastor will repeat his message in English and Cree to ensure that all present understand its full implications. Many other church members use only Cree in testimony and song, though they may well be using mainly English to participate in other aspects of the service, such as bible reading.

Before we can address the social characteristics of such code choices, it is necessary to discuss the formal and quantitative aspects of the languages being used. In Chapter Six, I will work to develop an ethnography of communication more based on fieldwork. The purpose of the present chapter is to delineate basic structural and demographic issues at work in the discourse of Pentecostals and other Cree speakers.

The Cree language

Cree speakers in Canada historically reside in a broad band stretching from Northern Quebec and Labrador into British Columbia and the Northwest Territories (where Cree is an official Aboriginal language).[26] Cree speakers living traditionally in their traditional territory feel that their language is perfectly adapted to its environment (Waugh 2001:470). This belief in the symbolic value of a unity between language, place, and practice is exemplified by official contemporary efforts of Aboriginal communities to record place names and stories about life on the land, and to teach children language and bush practice together in culture camps. A similar effort can be seen in Peerless Lake elder George Cardinal's sharing of his vocabulary on types of moose, for a textbook in the provincial Aboriginal Studies secondary school curriculum. Efforts such as George's educate youth both beyond and within the community, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal.

---

[26] The more recent movement of Cree beyond these ethnological boundaries was underlined to me when I began collaborating with Ray G. Thunderchild, a Cree translator living in Vancouver, who in turn introduced me to Salish carvers.

When I began studying Cree language, a Cree man whom I had known for several years told me: "You'll learn more Cree in an elder's lodge than you ever will in a classroom." He was making the point that the Cree language is a tool for expressing wisdom and cultural values, drawing on context for power and relevance. As such, Cree continues to be the most important code in a wide variety of social settings, including church. My acquaintance's example of the "elder's lodge" does not limit Cree's usefulness to contexts involving only aged cultural consultants. The Cree language (*nehiyawewin*) is the most widely spoken Aboriginal language in Canada, and also in Alberta. Thus, undertaking studies relating to Cree speech and language will continue to be important for social scientists who wish to understand broader social relations in Cree communities.

Cree is classified as a "large viable language," with at least 87,000 speakers (Norris and Jantzen 2002). Of these, some 26,000 speak Plains Cree ['Y' Dialect] (Wolfart 1996:390), the most relevant major dialect grouping for my study. According to the 1996 census (quoted in *op. cit.*), over 25,000 Aboriginal mother tongue speakers reside in Alberta, of whom the majority are Plains Cree speakers. Urban regions such as Edmonton, Grand Centre, and Wood Buffalo are each home to nationally significant populations of Cree speakers: Edmonton's population of Aboriginal mother tongue speakers is in the thousands, second only to Winnipeg's in size nationally. Similarly, many smaller Alberta Aboriginal communities (including reserves in the north such as Assumption/Chateh [Dene], but also southern reserves such as Morley [Stoney]) are linguistic enclaves, where a majority of residents (including children) speak primarily in their Aboriginal language on a daily basis.

There are also a large number of Cree-speaking enclaves, particularly in Northern Alberta, such as the communities I am studying, as well as others like John D'Or Prairie. Many such communities each are home for hundreds to thousands of Cree mother tongue speakers (Norris and Jantzen 2002). Efforts to sustain Cree are being widely undertaken through education systems, families, and communities, with the goal of ensuring strong prospects for the language's future.

The long-term outlook for survival of Cree is favourable overall; however, regionally, the situation varies. Alberta's Cree speech community appears to be the site of a decline in intergenerational language transmission levels.[27] According to the 1996 census, 70% of Cree mother tongue speakers across Canada spoke Cree as a home language (meaning that younger generations would be exposed to it regularly). This is a relatively high intergenerational transmission rate for an Aboriginal language in Canada, but still may point to an aging, shrinking pool of fluent speakers. Moreover, in Alberta, only 60% of Aboriginal mother tongue speakers speak an Aboriginal language as the home language (all data: *ibid*).

Currently, Plains Cree and other varieties of Cree are healthy languages, spoken by a significant number of children (Goddard 1996: Table 2). This creates a space for fostering development of Cree in both urban and rural settings, through education systems among other means. Positive steps have been taken in this direction by Cree educators, both in Alberta (Goldsmith *et al* 1987) and elsewhere (Feurer 1993).

A major factor hampering efforts to standardize and maintain the Cree language is the existence of a wide range of dialects across the country. Currently spoken are five dialects that vary phonetically and lexically.[28] Furthermore, in a number of communities, Cree co-exists with unrelated (*i.e.*, non-Algonquian) Aboriginal languages (such as Inuit, Dene, or Siouan languages), as well as French and/or English (*cf.* Patrick 2003). One historical factor behind the large number of Cree speakers in Western Canada is the conversion over the past two centuries of other groups (such as the local Athapaskan-speaking Beaver and Chipewyan Indians, as well as Iroquois and Ojibwa brought west to labour for the fur trade[29]) to Cree linguistic and social practices (Leonard 2000:58-60). During the 19th century, Cree was the lingua franca of northern Alberta (Mair 1999:34, Edwards 1999:55-56), and an important source of linguistic capital for its speakers. Linguistic variation through family background and local context (including "convergence" with unrelated languages [Scollon and Scollon 1979]) continues to the present, and confirms that the Cree speech community is by no means homogenous or static.

---

[27] See Fishman 1991, Krauss 1998 for discussion of intergenerational language transmission.

The picture becomes still more complex when one envisions "the Cree language" as representing a somewhat arbitrary subset within a continuum of related speech communities of the Algonquian language family, extending from Labrador to the Rockies, and into the USA. Depending on the region, Cree may blur into Ojibwa, Montagnais-Naskapi and/or Mitchif. In line with this, H.C. Wolfart (1996:390) notes the "controversial question" regarding the Eastern boundary of Cree. Similarly, Philips Valentine's work (1995:128) suggests that some people in northern Ontario move between local dialects of Cree and Ojibwa (including literacy skills) with much more ease than a western Cree speaker would experience in trying to understand Cree speech along James Bay. My fieldwork confirms that fluent adult Cree speakers from Alberta generally profess to be incapable of understanding Cree as spoken in Manitoba and Quebec, except for a few words.[30]

---

[28] Smith (1981:257) suggests that a sixth dialect was in use during the late prehistoric and early historic period, in the vicinity of Lake Athabasca.

[29] The drawing power of the language and its associated trade advantage is evidenced by the number of people currently living in Alberta Cree communities, who have surnames pointing to another tribal origin: such as Beaver, Dene, Stoney, Kootenay and Soto. Other common names, such as Cardinal, have Iroquois provenance.

So, the Cree language appears not as a bounded entity, but rather as a range of lexical and phonological distinctions made within speech communities across a large geographic area. Indeed, Wolfart cautions that the Cree dialects are so divergent that they could be considered as closely related languages (1996:390). Because of this, and associated historical differences, I strive to minimize my use, in this thesis, of linguistic examples or religious terms from outside of northern Alberta and adjacent regions.

Linguistic and cognitive categories play important roles in constructing personal identity and social reality (Lakoff 1987, Goffman 1973; 1974). While many authors have addressed the role of language structures in constructing the socio-religious milieu of Algonquian language speakers,[31] I focus on the more creative or individualized aspects of discourse as social phenomena worthy of analysis. Nevertheless, some discussion of the formal aspects of Cree is required as an adequate framework for understanding the recorded speech presented in this dissertation.

Phonologically, Plains Cree makes use of a small set of consonants, including p, t, k, c ('ch' or 'ts'), m, n, and s. A pre-aspirated h is also present, as are the semi-vowel diphthongs y and w, which are used as "glides" in combination together and with other consonants. Cree in Northern Alberta speak a subdialect of the "Y" Dialect (Plains Cree). The "Y" Dialect is spoken mainly in Alberta and Saskatchewan. Dialect boundaries are determined phonologically, according to apprehended use of a semi-vowel or diphthong. Thus, for the "Y" Dialect, the "y" in "*nîya*" ('me' or 'mine'), undergoes a shift across dialect boundaries, and could be written as "n," "l," "th," or "r" (the respective technical names of the other dialects extending through to northern Quebec).[32] Even within the "Y" Dialect (Plains Cree), significant regional variations exist in spelling, orthography, and phonology, as well as grammar and lexicon.

---

[30] This results in Alberta Cree Pentecostal missionaries to Manitoba Cree communities using predominantly English, for example.

[31] For example, see Craik 1982, Dahlstrom 1995, Goddard 2002, Joseph 1981, Kaa 1976, and Vaillancourt 1982 for a debate on the social meaning of animacy and inanimacy, gender categories in Cree speech.

All vowel sounds in Plains Cree are marked as either short or long, with no free variation between short and long sounds (although two short vowels in liaison could become a long vowel). Short vowels are written in Roman Orthography as a, i, o; long vowels as â, î, ô and e. The relatively small set of available constituent sounds tends to results in longer words, a trend which is amplified by the grammatical structure of Cree. Wolfart describes Cree as "a highly inflected language with elaborate systems of concord and cross-reference" (1996:391). Also, "many syntactic relations are specified within the noun and, especially, the verb" (*ibid*). Many elements of meaning and relation are conveyed by the addition of prefixes, suffixes, and infixes to stems. Thus, suffixes can be used to verbalize a "noun" or nominalize a "verb." Many descriptive qualities are conveyed as verbs (*e.g.,* colours) or prefixes.

In contrast to this highly structured approach to relations below the level of the word, "order of words and larger constituents is comparatively free" (*ibid*). As such, subject and object are implied through grammatical relations at the level of the word, rather than through word order or (necessarily) through the use of noun phrases. In light of these characteristics, Wolfart refers to Cree as a "non-configurational" language (1996:392). To specify grammatical relations at the level of the sentence, Cree uses features such as gender (animate and inanimate), the existence of multiple "third person" categories (obviation), and clause-dependant distinct verbal forms (inflectional orders) [*ibid*].

---

[32] See Thompson 1993 for a similar discussion of Cree dialect distinctions.

Both nouns and verbs are strongly marked for animacy. An array of different transitive and intransitive verb forms specify the gender of both the verb's subject and object. Obviation smoothes narrative flow by allowing one (singular or plural) third person into the "foreground" of a sentence, while other third/obviative persons are consigned to the "background" (with no information conveyed on plural or singular). Finally, conjunct and subjunctive verb forms are used to distinguish clauses (Wolfart 1996:393). The relatively free word order and non-configurational nature of Cree are evident in the transcriptions I undertake.

Figure Five: *kiwetinohk* (*cf.* Daveluy and Ferguson for a relevant discussion of public signs)

Cree can be written using either the Roman alphabet, or using characters designed for Cree. In these syllabic characters each possible consonant/vowel combination is represented (in principle) by one sound or character (while generally requiring at least two letters in Roman orthography). For an agglutinative language with fairly long words, such as Cree, use of syllabic script is speedier than Roman orthography. The syllabic language was either received indigenously by the Cree (Stevenson 1999-2000)) or was developed in northern Manitoba, by Rev. James Evans in the 1830s or early 1840s: using melted lead from tea chests for type; ink from soot and sturgeon oil; birch paper with deer hide binding; for a press he borrowed a fur-baling screw; it is said that the Aboriginal people were afraid of the power of these words (Crowe 1991:141). In either case, syllabics were certainly used and propagated by Methodists, Anglicans, and Catholics, who printed bibles and other resources by the score.

Since the early years of the twentieth century in northern Alberta, many individuals who did not speak English or French have been literate in syllabics. Today, literacy in general, and syllabic literacy in particular, is a resource held differentially throughout the community. While most adults can read and write to some extent, doing either for pleasure would be somewhat rare. As such, certain types of linguistic resources (for instance the ability to quote the bible) are marked as prestigious. Also, many types of speech events are constituted equally as literacy events. At the same time, the relatively high proportion of the population in the region who do not have effective literacy in either English or Cree also has the effect of de-emphasizing text and doctrine somewhat, in favour of a more experiential, narrative-based, and oral-formulaic approach to religious practice. This is particularly the case as many of those who do not read are respected elders, who merit inclusion and who are either speakers or members of the intended audience for much of the commentary on biblical readings.

Several elders learned syllabics in the bush: to read the bible, hymns, and other texts. Some individuals spoke of learning the syllabary in a single evening, from other Aboriginal people. Today, many elders' cabins and pickup trucks feature a Cree bible at easy reach. Some younger people in the community (including school children) can read syllabics, as well. In church, middle-aged and younger people generally read Cree material (such as the bible) in Roman orthography; also, many people below middle age appeared more comfortable reading the bible aloud in English, rather than Cree. Since most people over age 60 have had little to no formal schooling, the proportion of the population with effective literacy in English drops off rapidly above that age.

Cree linguist George Cardinal, of Wabasca, AB, describes "my language" as "Northern Cree," a mixture of Woods Cree ("TH" Dialect) and Plains Cree (LeClaire and Cardinal 1998:xi). However, L'Hirondelle *et al* treat the "northern sound" as a subdialect of the "Y" Dialect (2001:15) and do not mention any connection for it to Woods Cree. Phonologically, Northern Cree differs from Plains Cree mainly in its substitution of "î" for "e."[33] Lexically, however, Northern Cree is distinct enough to require a number of distinct or variant entries in the *Alberta Elders' Cree Dictionary* (LeClaire and Cardinal 1998), while still fairly easy for fluent Plains Cree speakers to understand, provided that "you have to really listen to what they're saying," as Ray G. Thunderchild stated.

---

[33] Because I am trained in Plains Cree and am working with a Plains Cree-speaking transcriber (Dorothy Thunder), many of the transcriptions in this dissertation make use of the Plains Cree sound [e], which appears as [î] in Northern Cree.

Northern Cree is also distinguished from Plains Cree by a higher number of borrowings from French and other languages. This is indicative of the longer contact with Euro-Canadians (including French-speaking priests and traders) in the north than on the plains, and the close association between Cree and Métis in northern Alberta. During my fieldwork, multiple consultants commented on the relatively large number of words of French derivation used in Northern Cree, as I shall discuss shortly.

Grammatically, Northern Cree differs slightly from Plains Cree, particularly where suffixes and prefixes are concerned. Also, northern speakers tend to talk faster and use more elision (a fact which is commented on by both northern and plains speakers, and which I have observed in attempting to follow spoken discourse).

There is some evidence that Northern Cree speakers may regard Plains Cree (such as that spoken at Saddle Lake) as more of a prestige form (Scollon and Scollon 1979:235) in spite of the fact that Cree tends to be in wider use the further north one goes. In any case, northern speakers will admit to "laughing" at the speech of those from the Saskatchewan River region. Northern Cree speakers who receive post-secondary orthographic or grammatical training in the more standardized Plains Cree often learn new words or new ways of speaking, and might be told, "You sound like a Prairie!" upon return to their communities. Northern Cree and Plains Cree are mutually comprehensible for fluent speakers; however, Woods Cree (spoken in northeastern Saskatchewan) is somewhat more difficult for northern Alberta speakers to understand.

Even between northern Alberta communities, differences in speech practice exist. As I moved the focus of my research from Cadotte Lake east to Trout Lake/Peerless Lake in 2005, it became clear that many people felt the two districts (sharing kin groups and located less than 200 km apart) each had a distinct style and speed of speech, which could be recognized and pinpointed by fluent speakers familiar with the region. Moreover, the community of Loon River, in between these areas, was recognized as having yet a third, intermediate, "way of speaking" (Hymes 1974). People in these communities also have a different slang register in Cree than those from other communities, slightly further away, such as Gift Lake.

There is a greater yet divergence in speech norms between the isolated communities, in the Lesser Slave Lake Interior, and the reserve communities to the south of them. For instance, although Cree is widely understood by adults in the large reserve communities around Slave Lake and High Prairie, it is less commonly used as a public language (see footnote 35). On the other hand, in Cadotte Lake, Wabasca, and, to an even greater extent, in Trout Lake/Peerless Lake, the public use of Cree is much more common. In the latter communities, the language has both high symbolic and practical value for those wishing to communicate competently outside of a very small range of contexts (such as *some* political meetings, a minority of religious activities, and other, capitalism-oriented undertakings, such as employment/training and school events), which favour the use of English.

Many people contrasted "real Cree" or "fine Cree" (associated with elders and oratory) with the "fake Cree" or "Cringlish" spoken by most residents in the communities today. While sometimes these comments reflected discomfort with the prevalence of code-mixing and perceived shifts towards English use, in other cases the comments referred simply to speaking Cree ungrammatically: using stems without affixes and so forth. However, Cree teacher Hilda Cardinal rejected this, seeing the fast, informal speaking style as a sign of fluency, not fakeness. On one occasion, she taught me the formal way to say a word, then said: "But if you're a fluent speaker and you've been an Indian all your life, then you say it like this..." Informality, then, becomes a positive identity marker, rather than a slip-up requiring repair.

English and the bilingual speech event

As the majority of residents in Trout and Peerless speak both Cree and English fluently, a great many utterances are bilingual. While working with a group of men, including a teenager, I noticed that this young man spoke mainly in Cree and appeared to have a flexible vocabulary fitting a wide range of tasks and contexts. Occasionally, he used an English word like "winch" in the flow of Cree. "I'm a different person here than I am at school," he told me, after our discussion had turned to his studies.

In spite of this young man's linguistic competence, in other cases codeswitching appears to be a tactic to ensure maximum understanding, particularly among children, who may be the target of some aspect of an utterance's meaning. As Lillian Alook shouted into a bullhorn, trying to arrange a co-ed three-legged race at a community Treaty Day celebration early in my fieldwork:

> Three-legged-race nâpewak ekwa iskwewak 'moy' awâsisak under twelve
> ('Three-legged-race. Men and women. No children under 12.')

The structure, variance, and predictability of codeswitching are beyond the focus of this thesis; however, I suspect that this practice is generally more situational or tactical than structural or law-based (*cf.* Samuels 2004:8).

Regarding the use of English in official circumstances, this is a code, which needs to be mastered laboriously by local people, even by the minority of those who have completed high school. Many community members do not have confidence in their command of English. Thus, a relatively small group of community members constitute a leadership cadre. This cadre are distinguished by relatively high levels of education and by an ability to speak, read, and/or write bureaucratic English as required to communicate with outside governmental and religious (as the case may be) agencies. This overlapping political and ecclesiastical leadership cadre work closely with a group of mainly unilingual elders (some of whom are former community leaders themselves), who provide advice and legitimacy internally. Both these elders and the leaders themselves could be considered cultural/linguistic brokers.

Important issues are generally discussed in Cree with elders in the home, cabin, community meeting, or church. Even members of the leadership cadre stated that, sometimes, the terminology and mode of address used in land claim or political meetings ('high words') were difficult to understand or explain to other community members. For instance, in discussions about land claims, the term "infrastructure" is used repeatedly in a polysemic manner. As Leo Alook told me, such a word would require "19 words" to adequately translate, and so is generally summed up in Cree by discussing the concept of sewage or dirty water. Andrew Orr suggested that such communication difficulties have very real, practical, and anticipatable benefits for the (mainly) Euro-Canadian people using the high words. Thus "high words" are used to full tactical advantage in such meetings by government representatives (Urion 1978).

A related dimension of linguistic power is access to media resources. Although many people have access to English-language Aboriginal newspapers, an Aboriginal radio station,[34] and Aboriginal programming on TV, the vast majority of print and electronic media are in English. Media technology also makes available resources for the teaching and maintenance of the Cree language and corpus; the Cree-speaking church networks in the community provide individuals access to purchase bible and hymn books produced in Cree by outside publishers.

In Trout Lake and Peerless Lake, over 90% of residents (including virtually all long-term resident adults) speak Cree as their mother tongue (Canada 2001).[35] At least 35% of residents speak only Cree at home. At least 50% speak both English and Cree at home. Just over 10% of total residents speak only English at home; this number includes a small but significant group of non-Native teachers and other transient professionals. It is noteworthy that in the slightly smaller community of Trout Lake, more than half of residents speak only Cree at home, while virtually all the rest speak both English and Cree at home. Just 5% speak only English at home (all data: *ibid*).

These statistics back up my fieldwork observation that nearly all people between 20 and 60 (one might even argue for 15-65) in both Trout and Peerless are fluently bilingual. Levels of English proficiency decline rapidly among people above this age:

---

[34] The radio station, CFWE, is an Alberta-based station, broadcast into Peerless Lake. There is some Cree programming and music: a Peerless Lake band, Purple Haze, wrote a Cree song which was played on CFWE.

[35] I was assisted by Chuck Humphrey of the U of A Libraries' Data Library in accessing this information for Trout and Peerless. In contrast, according to publicly available data, only 53% of residents on Woodland Cree First Nation reserves (mainly at Cadotte Lake), and 55% on Bigstone Cree Nation reserves (mainly at Wabasca), stated that their mother tongue was Cree. The lower numbers seen here may reflect an influx of members from outside the region following a land claim settlement (in the case of WCFN) and Wabasca's status as a relatively large, multi-ethnic, centre for education and commerce (in the case of BCN). However, both these centers had a much higher proportion of Cree mother tongue speakers than is seen on reserves near Slave Lake, at 10-25% of the local population (Statistics Canada. 2001 Community Profiles. http://www12.statcan.ca/english/profil01/CP01/Index.cfm?Lang=E. Accessed January 30, 2008.). Presumably, language shift is greater in these latter communities due to the higher local population of non-Aboriginals, and the longer history of contact in this region. Home language use data are not available for these communities (Personal Communication: Chuck Humphrey. 2006).

indeed, many people above age 65 professed to speak no English.[36] Even so, with the great majority of people speaking both English and Cree fluently, many utterances use elements of both: even older people often use English place names, numbers, and some nouns (such as "store") when speaking in Cree, for instance. As a result, most speech events in the community are bilingual to some extent. However, in my experience, adults greeting each other would generally speak mainly Cree, perhaps with some English words or phrases.

During the first two decades of the twentieth century, many Métis in less isolated northern Alberta communities spoke some English and/or French (Ned Gladue, quoted in Sinclair 1998:68, Mair 1999:34). Still, Cree was the preferred language of all Aboriginal people throughout this period (Mair 1999:34), and the only language spoken in isolated northern regions (Edwards 1999:56). During and prior to this period, French had a significant influence on spoken Cree. For instance, Cree speakers in Cadotte Lake routinely say "mercy" ('thanks'); Bernard Cardinal gave "poile" ('pan') as another example of borrowing from French.[37] provides Further examples of French-Cree blends and loan words used in Catholic practice from its beginnings in the region include *kopesew* ('s/he confesses'); *anamensikan* ('altar'[38]) [Elliott 1886 quoted in Douaud 1982:67]. Numerous examples of English borrowings also exist, of which my personal favourite (an unmarked lexical item which is heard frequently) is " 'phone-ahiket" ('s/he's making a phone call').

---

[36] The situation in Cadotte Lake was somewhat different: when I did my second stint of fieldwork there in 2005, only one octogenarian woman did not speak English, although this group had been more numerically significant in 1996.

[37] It is interesting to note that both of these words contain letters (l and r) not commonly used in Cree.

[38] This combines a French locative phrase ("*à la messe*"), rendered into Cree phonetic conventions, with the Cree 'tool' suffix ("*-kan*") completing the word.

Today in Trout and Wabasca a very small number of Métis individuals aged over 50 have some facility in French; the individual French-speakers whom I know of grew up in communities away from Trout, in places such as Caslan or Wabasca, where the Métis population may have been less integrated with local Indians and more with local francophones including clergy (*cf.* Douaud 1982) than is the case at Trout Lake. In no case during my fieldwork did anyone claim to be a speaker of Mitchif or any other formalized type of French-Cree or English-Cree creole (other than "Cringlish," which is mentioned humourously).

Among younger people, French is regarded as self-evidently unuseful and esoteric. When I asked one man (born in Wabasca) if he spoke any languages other than Cree and English, he said dryly, "Just French." At this point, he and all others present began to laugh, as if the very suggestion that one among them might speak French was absurd. In another case, William Houle asked what languages I spoke "besides Cree." When I told him my French was much better than my Cree, he affected an Inspector Clouseau accent and said: "Whelll, yew are verry smarrt!" As another Métis activist asked, rhetorically, "Why the hell would *I* speak French?" Clearly there is a very limited association between French or French creoles with Aboriginality in most of Alberta (but see Bakker 1997 for contrary examples elsewhere in the plains region). This perception is interesting as there is a lengthy historical association between French-Canadians and "nos Indiens" (Fr. Routhier. Letter to Fr. Vandersteene. April 10, 1967. AGM). The Oblate order was founded in France and its large-scale Canadian Indian mission was mandated from Quebec. As such, the order's lingua franca was French.

The Oblates swiftly adopted the Cree syllabary, and initially emphasized teaching in French and Aboriginal languages. This linguistic boundary maintenance served both to protect and isolate converts from outside influences, promoting the Oblates' anti-modernist goals, and also to extend the national profile and interests of French Canadians generally (Choquette 1995:52; Huel 1996:19). For instance, when the Oblates began operating a steamship out of Ft. Chipewyan during the 1890s, Bishop Grouard remarked that he hoped the Indians would notice that the (English) HBC was not the only institution able to deploy new technology, and that the "French were also capable of holding up their heads" (quoted in Wetherell and Kmet 2000:19). The association between French and Cree is still present, as many relevant archival documents (including Cree linguistic materials) are available in French only.

Returning to sociolinguistics, the situation regarding the linguistic competence of children is somewhat more complex than that of adults. Does the increasing use of English and availability of media in recent decades presage a decline in use of Cree? A seeming paradox discussed by adults in the communities is the apparent ability of many children to "translate for" their unilingual Cree-speaking grandparents, but inability to "talk to" them. This suggests, at minimum, a high passive knowledge of Cree among younger speakers. Still, the language may be approaching a tipping point. Most people I talked to about this subject stated that nearly all high school students in Trout Lake were fluent Cree speakers, but that this was less clear in Peerless Lake. In both communities, however, nearly everyone agreed that very few pre-high school aged children spoke fluent Cree. I can only add that my fieldwork (based on discussion, casual observance of linguistic behaviour, and participation in high school Cree classes) suggests that some children may have higher linguistic abilities in Cree than is commonly accorded to their cohort.

Children and youth are the major focus of ongoing language revitalization efforts and education projects. For instance, high school students in Trout and Peerless are the object of a sophisticated videoconferencing pilot project linking several schools in a Cree course. The course is taught remotely by a Cree speaker who is a certified teacher; she is assisted in each school by local, Cree speaking, teachers with some curriculum training but without professional teaching certification. It is not clear how ongoing efforts by the provincial government to promote Cree in schools will affect curriculum, given that the proposed curriculum appears to be targeted at second language learners, rather than native speakers, as is the case in northern Quebec and elsewhere.

Many youth in their late teens and early twenties speak mainly Cree, and value their language highly. I am aware of parents choosing to make an effort to raise fluently bilingual children, consciously speaking a higher register of Cree to their young children than they commonly use themselves. The use and maintenance of Cree are dependent on other social factors, including context and place. Children who spend time out of the communities report speaking less Cree. On the other hand, at a community camp held in the bush in August, 2006, children were seen to dramatically increase their use of Cree while undertaking traditional tasks such as cleaning fish. Lillian Alook, animator of the camp, and grandmother to many of the children present, consciously took the opportunity to teach relevant vocabulary to the children alongside the skill itself (see Figure 28). As these children develop into more competent members of their speech community, they may display a more active ability to use the relevant codes circulating in the community.

Religious registers

With the discussion of individuals' language trajectories, we move away from formal linguistics towards the ethnography of communication. As such, in this thesis, I will focus less on grammar and more on beliefs and values about socially appropriate speech. I will incorporate attention to aspects of embodiment, performance, genre (including both Cree and Pentecostal genres), and ethnomusicology, as well as sociolinguistic questions regarding code choice and language shift.

One area of special interest in my study is people's choice of religious terminology. Specifically, I have become very interested in the use of different terms for God and religion. Often, the significance of these words is contested, not only between but within denominations. A central theoretical tenet in my fieldwork is Pierre Bourdieu's observation that religion is a particularly fruitful field of study for discourse analysis, as religious language exemplifies "the polysemy inherent in legitimate language" (Bourdieu 1982:17; *cf.* Frye 1990; 1992). This polysemy allows multiple groups to feel represented through ritual language; however all people are bound to interpret it differently. As such, religious discourse is "amphibious" (*op. cit.*:18) and mutable. Religious discourse takes advantage of language's capacity to express things beyond comprehension. This provides a tool to understand the use by Cree of Christian words and concepts in ways that may not resemble those envisioned by missionaries.

Cree religious discourse is intermixed with daily speech and practice. Religious discourse also occurs in predominantly non-verbal contexts such as ritual or foraging,[39] dancing, feasting, smoking, and drumming (Deiter-McArthur *et al* 1987, Moore 1993, Waugh 1996:49), which each may constitute a means of communicating with other persons. Determining who the participants of a given discourse are is an important prerequisite to understanding it; thus, the Cree ontology calls us to extend ideas of *parole* cross-culturally to include a broader range of potential speakers and hearers (Darnell 1991:91). Speech occurs in social relationships (*ibid*:96; Darnell 1974:315), with listening and speaking equally active roles. Conversation is based on differential power relationships, with esteem accorded to those who are older, more knowledgeable, and more spiritually powerful (Darnell 1991:93). These mores are borne out in the practice of Pentecostals, as esteemed elders are generally the first to testify, and elders always participate in performative rituals such as healing prayers and anointings.

Pentecostal testimony by a respected elder fulfills a number of conditions of ideal Cree speech. Ideal speech is a monologue or narrative related by a knowledgeable person (*op. cit.*:316), resembling the Christian genre of sermon or testimony. Furthermore, in the Cree worldview, ideal knowledge is obtained primarily through experience. First hand accounts are privileged over theoretical discussions (Darnell 1991:95). Discourse may be addressed to (or by) others present, including spirits and the dead (*ibid*:100). In traditional Cree discourse, as in Pentecostal discourse, recognizing these co-present beings is an important part of personal power. Speakers are to delineate their knowledge; often this occurs at the beginning and/or end of narratives. As such, narrators discussing spiritual issues might use framing or transitional mechanisms in discourse: tracing their personal authority as a teller through life experience, cultural history, and spiritual power (Darnell 1991:100; Darnell 1974:324, 335). Ultimately, it is life experience, knowledge, and spiritual power that give one the authority to speak (*ibid*:328). Each of these points calls to mind both Cree counseling speeches and Pentecostal testimonies.

---

[39] The relationship between hunter and prey is a dialogical relationship (Darnell 1991:91, Brightman 2002:115).

Understanding Cree culture is dependant to a large extent on understanding Cree speech genres. Attending to elders' testimony can provide a rich understanding of the past. The facts do not speak for themselves, however: we need to think about an elder's story "in the right way" before it becomes knowledge (Walter Lightning, quoted in Calliou 2004:78). Similarly, religious and secular narratives each provide Crees with a means to interpret tradition into experience, providing facts within a given context (Preston 1975b:10). Narratives thus define basic values and plots of culture, as well as having an interactional and aesthetic value (*ibid*:14). Thus, through narrative, the opposition between individual and social is mediated.

The concept of *acimowin* (literally, 'a telling') remains very important for Cree and for fieldworkers. In explaining my methods and seeking to elicit life stories of unilingual interview subjects, interpreters frequently used the action stem *acimosta-* ('telling for s/o') to ask elders for their participation. The generic narrative conception of *acimowin* is useful in the sense that it could refer to either a conventional story about someone's life or function as an analog for stories about religious conversion (that is, a testimony), equally within the limits of the genre. By functioning in many contexts, from at least two traditions, this type of utterance is highly polyvalent, opening up many possible understandings, which could harmonize or clash with one another. Can a story be both an elder's teaching *and* a salvation narrative? My research suggests the answer is yes: this brings us to a discussion of Pentecostal speech and genre. While I have by no means provided a comprehensive account of Cree speech genres, my brief introduction gives some context in this area. Such structural accord between speech genres has been effectively utilized by Cree Pentecostals in setting the forms of worship in their churches to maximum accordance with local traditions.

A linguistic or generic frame of analysis is very appropriate to understanding Pentecostalism and Evangelicalism. Moreover, converting to these traditions requires learning a new way of speaking. While technically the code used by Pentecostal speakers of a given language is referred to as a "register," many analysts use terms such as 'religious language' or 'Pentecostal language' to define such phenomena.

Religious registers

Webb Keane states that "religious language" is generally highly marked and is different from ordinary language both semantically and formally (1997:47,52). Turning specifically to the anthropological study of North American Christianity, Susan Harding emphasizes the importance of learning a new language (that is, a new way of ordering the world) as a precondition to conversion. Indeed, in a chapter entitled, "Speaking is Believing," she suggests that religious conversion is "a process of acquiring a specific religious language or dialect" (2000:34). It is through acquiring competence with the correct codes and genres that one develops and propagates correct belief and practice. While Harding is perhaps less attentive to genre and micro-discourse than her idea ("speaking is believing") would suggest, nevertheless she mentions a number of speech genres (such as witnessing and preaching), which work in different contexts both to teach unbelievers and to lift up believers.

Like Cree tradition then, Pentecostalism can be treated as an oral tradition, in which worldview and beliefs are passed orally from generation to generation (Lawless 1988:x). Elaine Lawless' micro-analysis of Pentecostal women's speech in a rural Midwest congregation is particularly suggestive for my purposes here, so I shall discuss her approach at some length, as well as adding contextual information from other secondary literature. She closely examines how Pentecostal testimony allows women in particular to speak with more authority than they might otherwise be afforded (*ibid*:x). This reflects my research experience, in which women give many testimonies in church, and even (though more rarely) act as pastors and ordain pastors.[40]

Many aspects of Pentecostal practice are folk-oriented: oral-formulaic, traditional, stylized, and ritualistic (*ibid*:4). As such, the different verbal genres in this tradition can be analyzed as performance art. Lawless states: "As an oral religion, Pentecostalism relies on the power of words and the ability of the speakers of those words to release that power" (1988:8-9). She further suggests many possible speech genres (apart from musical performances, which include several subgenres of their own) recognized within church: preaching, praying, testifying. Genres or categories of various audience responses include shouts, prayer, tongues, singing, and embodied gestures such as dancing and hand-raising. Lawless also mentioned as genres songs, healing, prophecy, (message) interpretation, and ritual greetings[41] (*ibid*:69).

---

[40] Many women in my study agreed to be recorded in their church testimony: "It's not my words. It's whatever God leads me to say," stated one. The importance of religious speech, and perhaps, the taking of the woman's speech by God, appears to allow relaxation of norms against recorded/public female speech.

Some consultants suggested that Pentecostal discursive practices, such as shouting and speaking in tongues, were incompatible with speech norms operative in Cree society, particularly among elders. However, there is ample evidence in my recorded corpus to suggest that many local people, including unilingual Cree-speaking elders, have been able to adapt these Pentecostal discursive practices within spoken Cree. In one case, an elder woman shouted in Cree (very rare): "God has given a voice to speak. He gave us a voice to SHOUT!" (translation: Peter Thunder).

Just as in traditional Cree discourse, Pentecostal speech genres are harnessed by those with knowledge (often by elders) to represent the correct order of things. Moreover, genre and other framing mechanisms are manipulated, as one tool in controlling the service, to ensure that things unfold in a reasonably predictable manner, while maintaining the idea that the spirit could take over at any time (Lawless 1988:59,67). This is another aspect of the performance approach to understanding ritual: the tension between normative/institutional structures and human/spiritual creativity.

Lawless makes central to her discussion the idea that Pentecostalism (like Cree tradition, as I observe) prizes *knowledge*, but knowledge that is experiential in character rather than doctrinal. An interpretation emphasizing knowledge reflects the primacy given to *logos* ('the Word,' but also "unity of consciousness or reason" [Frye 1990:9]) as God, in the Gospel of John.

---

[41] Rather than describe these genres at present, I will do so in the context of a discussion of my own speech data, later in my dissertation, since some of the locally recognized genres differ from those identified by Lawless, Harding, Harvey Cox and Jeff Titon.

In what I suggest is a parallel to Aboriginal ontologies, oral tradition in Pentecostalism plays an important role in mediating the experience of the Word and of sharing the knowledge:

> Rather than being a religion based on official tenets determined by knowledgeable officials, Pentecostalism is based on things that happen to people. And the essence of the experiences, as well as their interpretation, must be communicated to the other members of the group. It is on that foundation that all doctrine rests. (Lawless 1988:33).

Lawless' discussion also points towards the importance of knowledge as power in relevant Aboriginal religions (*cf.* Darnell 1991; 1974, Goulet 1998, Ridington 1988).

One might also mention folklorist Jeff Titon (1988), who conducted ethnography of communication and ethnomusicology research among an independent Baptist congregation in rural Virginia during the 1970s and 1980s. In terms remarkably similar to those used by Lawless, above, Titon's principal consultant states that the Word, enacted by the congregation, can turn the church into "a powerhouse for God," (quoting book title) with speech as its main force. Titon identifies his and Lawless' works as the only ethnography of communication research on Christianity in the USA. Touching on Lawless, Titon identifies a number of genres, forms, and practices that are shared between Midwest Pentecostals and Appalachian Fundamentalists. This leads him to suggest that the two spring from a commonwealth of American Folk Christianity. Also, through the time depth of his research, he notes that Baptists have alternately adopted or rejected numerous genres of speech deemed to be associated with Pentecostalism. The interplay between Fundamentalism and Pentecostalism, and the relevance of genre and speech in this process, is important in my analysis of the shift from Evangelicalism to Pentecostalism in the isolated communities, as I show in Chapter Three.

Harvey Cox, who has conducted fieldwork among Pentecostals internationally, suggests that Pentecostalism is "the most experiential branch of Christianity" (1994:14). Pentecostals are not "fundamentalists" or "Evangelicals" in the true sense, Cox writes, since the core of their worship is based on mystical experience, rather than belief in text (*ibid*:15; *cf.* Balmer 2006:25-6,137,336, Synan 1997:207). This opens the door to a "performance"-oriented (Cox 1994:147) study of Pentecostalism. Cox (himself an amateur musician) suggests that Pentecostal worship closely resembles jazz improvisation and, further, that Pentecostalism and jazz are closely related manifestations of America's mélange of European textual formalism and African embodied practice (*ibid*:143). Jazz great John Coltrane provides an intriguing perspective, which appears to support Cox's proposition, on the relationship of music to experiencing Christianity, in the liner notes and music of his album, *A Love Supreme*. This relationship will become an important theme in my argument as I explore the relation between music and religious experience in Chapter Six.

The focus on performance I have been discussing creates a space for analyzing worship in general, and Pentecostal worship in particular, as a moment in which a "breakthrough to performance" (Hymes 1975) may occur. One is at the edge of language and human creativity at key moments of the religious experience. This creates major challenges and special opportunities for the researcher, necessitating (for both the worshipper and the researcher) special attentiveness to paralinguistic modes including the following: nonverbal communication, "holy language" (*i.e.,* glossolalia), and music, as well as other emotional, somatic, or embodied states of worship.

In jazz, the importance of text or structure is still central in spite of a commitment to improvisation: through the sharing of a body of standards, as well as frames including genres, keys, tones, and modalities, players shape the performance. In the same way, I suggest, based on my research that a doctrinal, text-oriented, approach to religion is still important to the Pentecostals that I studied with. This may reflect the local strength historically of the broader Evangelical movement, and somewhat obviates Lawless' claims that Pentecostalism is mainly a folkloric and experiential religion. Indeed, my research suggests that many Pentecostals have a high degree of doctrinal sophistication and a strong interest in "that Word," its interpretation, and its propagation beyond their face-to-face community.

Of course, the ultimate example of Pentecostal language is that of glossolalia or tongues, as Lawless alludes (*ibid*: 53-54). A fuller discussion of this phenomenon awaits us. Suffice it to say that the command of register and genre become markers to maintain group boundaries (*ibid*:47). This includes embodied or "kinesaic" language, such as raised arms, waving hands, closed eyes, tears "and the state of eventual disconnection from one's surroundings that implies a trance" (*ibid*:50). This resembles discussion of kinesics and proxemics in linguistic anthropology literature. As with Lawless' Pentecostals, there is also much to suggest that non-verbal states of communication are very familiar to the Cree, and may be central to their communication strategies. Nadia Ferrara demonstrates the meaningfulness of silence, reticence, and indirection as strategies for preserving autonomy (2004:48-9) in Cree speech.

Figure Six: Hands Raised

Another academic attempt to bridge the gap between doctrine and experience through research on (non-Pentecostal) mainstream American Evangelicals is that of Tanya Luhrmann (2004). She seeks a model that will incorporate embodied aspects of religious experience, but also insists on the importance of language. Luhrmann both draws on and critiques Harding's "speaking is believing" work, while offering some innovations regarding Harding's claims about religious registers. Luhrmann suggests that the "linguistic/cognitive" (*ibid*:519) aspects of belief, alluded to by analysts such as Harding, Lawless, Cox, and Titon, can be further subdivided into the following components:

> -lexicon ("words or phrases to describe their new life in Christ")
> -syntax ("themes that structure the logic of their new understanding")

-narrative ("a common plotline that describes the way they decided to join this way of life") [*ibid*:519]

Luhrmann then redefines these components under the rubric of "new knowledge" which is necessary to the subject's conversion. As I have been arguing, the importance of knowledge has strong correlates in Cree spiritual traditions.

Luhrmann notes that understanding experience requires recognition of embodied, performative, emotional states, not just mental ones. Her use of the term "metakinesis" (terminology from dance to describe the communication of emotional states) is similar to Lawless' proposal for the study of a "kinesaic language." This type of communication, according to Luhrmann, allows God to become intimate with believers, as well as fostering intimacy between believers.

Thomas Csordas (*e.g.*, 1994), in studies of Catholic Charismatics and practitioners of Navajo spirituality, proposes that discursive, hermeneutic, studies should take greater account of embodiment. William Foley (1997) also opines that linguistic anthropology should attend more to embodied aspects of communication. As such, the proposed study of "kinesaic language" opens the door to discussion of paralanguage as an embodied state for the believer, experiencing things that are too deep to express through speech. Paralanguage is relevant to the Pentecostal belief in embodied phenomena such as healing, demonic possession, laying on hands, and anointing, as well as crowd behaviours such as clapping, dancing, foot-tapping, and raising hands or bibles.

"Tongues" are seen as the manifestation of the gifts of the spirit, described in the charter myth of Pentecostalism. Pentecostals strive to recreate this moment in their communion with the Holy Spirit and other believers. The original Pentecostal "powerful meeting" occurred among Jesus' followers shortly after his death:

> When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind,[42] and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the spirit gave them ability. (Acts 2:1-4. NRSV)

Virtually all Christians feel this passage is canonical; however, most mainstream Protestants and Catholics would consider this type of miracle to have occurred in a biblical/mythical age, while allowing for the continued activity of the Holy Spirit in other, less dramatic ways. Pentecostals, for their part, seek out such gifts.

The gift of tongues is frequently performed by some (but not all) congregants at Trout Lake and Peerless Lake. William Auger began speaking "holy language" during an interview at his home, as if to demonstrate his claim that it just flowed out of him: "I can't help it," he stated. The experience provoking tongues (as well as other, paralinguistic responses, such as dance) is "so total it shatters the cognitive packaging" (Cox 1994:71). Like prayer, tongues are an example of "primal speech" (*ibid*:81), which "pinpoints the importance of ecstatic utterance" (*ibid*:82). For Cox, such primal speech resembles the elementary forms of religious life, or a generative grammar of religious experience. Ecstasy is not an irrational state, but a way of knowing in which "deep speaks to deep" (Tillich, quoted in Cox 1994:86). Speaking in tongues resembles improvisatory "scat" singing, as it attempts to transcend the limits of language and text (Cox 1994:148). Cox quotes Ann and Barry Ulanov in calling prayer "primary speech" (*ibid*:88), in recognition that "the reality that religious symbols strive to express ultimately defies even the most exalted human language" (*ibid*:92). This is seen to be the language of God (*ibid*:87), or "holy language," as William Auger stated.

---

[42] The Greek scriptural name for the Holy Spirit is *Pneuma* ('wind'). This phrase has also been taken up in the name of a Native ministry in northern Alberta, "Mighty Rushing Wind Ministries".

Tongues "represent the core of all Pentecostal conviction: the spirit of God needs no mediators but is available to anyone in an intense, immediate, indeed interior way" (Cox 1994:87). Indeed, God is as close as one's larynx and lips (*ibid*:95).[43] This allows people to communicate directly with God in a way that is personal, embodied, and authoritative. Even the lowliest congregant can speak to God as well as the pastor. In a dramatic sermon, Pastor Jack Okemow compared Pentecostal gifts to the biblical image of the curtain being torn, between the Holy of Holies (where only the priest could go) and the public part of the Temple, at the day of Jesus' crucifixion. Thus, tongues are compared to Jesus' sacrifice as a means to bring God and people together.

An astute observer must note the divergence between the ecstatic scatting of Pentecostals and the spontaneous apprehension of world languages described in the Bible. Indeed, it would appear that there is little chronological continuity between these practices. Professing Pentecostal scholar Vinson Synan argues that:

> The essentials of what Pentecostals call baptism in the holy spirit was part of the public liturgy of the churches for at least eight centuries after the day of Pentecost (McDonnell and Montague, quoted in Synan 1997:xi).

For his part, Cox opines that tongues disappeared following the apostolic period, but occurred from time to time over the centuries, ultimately being formalized in such verbal art forms as Catholic and Orthodox medieval chant (Cox 1994:90).

Early in the 20th century there were multiple cases of Pentecostal missionaries who went to China or India, believing they would be able to communicate with people there upon their arrival; over the long term, some of these individuals did manage to learn languages in more conventional ways, and became missionaries. Lawless (1988:52) suggests that some people today believe that they are speaking other languages, which may not be currently spoken on earth. In general though, one now sees a more internally focused use of tongues as a private prayer language, having meaning that may not be accessible to most. Very rare is the associated gift of interpreting tongues, for this is a more authoritative (and accountable) form of public speech.[44]

---

[43] In spite of this emphasis on gifts, most Pentecostals now feel that one may be saved without having tongues. Also (as Titon and Csordas note), some networks within mainstream Protestant denominations (as well as among Catholics, Evangelicals, and Fundamentalists) have taken on "charismatic" practices, including tongues. This flow demonstrates the difficulty of defining religious networks based on boundaries in belief and practice.

Academic discussion of tongues is challenging, not least because this type of communication cannot practically (or, I would argue, ethically) be transcribed or translated. Nevertheless, I view glossolalia as part of a continuum of ecstatic and improvisational utterances, some of which are more meaningful in a general context. As such, I focus more on the ideological value of glossolalia, rather than the supposed content of specific ecstatic utterances.

Translating Cree Pentecostal discourse

Bringing together the codes I have described in this chapter requires I use ethnographic methods including translation. Translation theory poses considerable challenges, which are beyond the scope of this thesis, except to say that my experiences reflect the undertaking's inherent complexity.[45] As I found, translation is also *practically* difficult. My limited command of Cree requires that I work with translators, and I have been fortunate to work with several able ones.

Leo Alook, an experienced translator himself, told me that the best translator he had ever met could really convey bureaucratic concepts to elders, and could easily restate the concerns of the elders to bureaucrats in English. This gifted translator was a functionally illiterate Cree man with very limited schooling, who had learned most of his English while working in the bush with white labourers. Translation, then, requires brains but not necessarily a formal education; it is more an art or craft than a science.

---

[44] Clarence and Ruth Jaycox, CMA missionaries, informed me that in their theology the only biblically sanctioned use of tongues was one in which an able interpreter follows on the original performance, to communicate God's hidden message to the congregation.

[45] For a fuller discussion of translation in anthropology and other disciplines, see Darnell 2001, Friedrich 1986, Malinowski 1935 Vol. 2, Nida 1993, Rubel 2003, Scott 2000, Segal 2003.

The variations I have been discussing on the level of dialect and speech community make the translation project still more complicated. Many concepts and practices were easily understood (if not always easily translated) by members of the northern Pentecostal speech community I studied in. Interestingly, these lexical items were less clear to other fluent speakers of Plains Cree, who were not adherents of Pentecostalism or familiar with Christian ritual practice. For example, Cree Instructor Dorothy Thunder transcribed some of the church discourse I recorded, and worked with me in my attempts to translate the transcriptions into English. In one text, a respected elder was recounting to the congregation a narrative of two healings he had arranged: through faith and the power of prayer, as well as the intercession of congregants and the use of blessed or anointed clothing. The narrative also included some thematically unrelated content, including in-jokes and speech directed at individual audience members. I am presenting portions of this narrative (Cree transcription and English translation) in Chapter Six, so I will only refer to salient details of the translation process here.

This narrative proved particularly difficult for Dorothy and I to translate. Although she was able to transcribe and understand most of the surface referential meaning, we could not make sense of some sections. When I checked our draft translation with Peter Thunder, Marjorie Memnook, and Ray G. Thunderchild, more difficulties surfaced as each consultant raised additional problems and issues.

Many of the problems Dorothy and I had in understanding arose from practical matters, such as the following: deixis; non-verbal communication; dialogical sections where unknown individuals (in the congregation or arriving) are referred to or called upon; loss of narrative thread and repair; inconclusive gender of participants in story due to the grammatical structure of Cree; inconclusive timeframe due to speech convention of relating narratives in present tense. Most of these are simple issues of modality that could have been easily resolved had Dorothy been present in the service, had we had detailed knowledge of context and cotexts, or had I comprehensively video recorded the proceedings. Some other lacunae could be addressed collaboratively through my ethnographically derived contextual knowledge, or by referring to fieldnotes and photos of the church, as well as our use of an earlier interpretive paraphrase of several testimonies that I had asked Peter Thunder to do.

Other questions required me to return to the field for consultation with Peter. The elder in question was in Fox Lake during that particular follow-up visit.[46] Peter shed much light on my understanding of the testimony, but reaffirmed the basic indeterminacy of some of it by shaking his head and chuckling occasionally during the recording: "I'm not sure what he means. We'll have to go talk to him."

Unlike Dorothy, Peter identified technical glitches in modalities or channel, focusing on these as the source of the utterance's difficulty: "He's too close to the mic!"

---

[46] I have discussed (using more than one translator) my research with him and his wife on multiple occasions, to ensure they were comfortable with my putting this effort into translating their remarks. I believe they each have a high degree of comfort with their participation in the research, and are pleased to have their message reach beyond the church. Further visits and consultations with these and other elders and translators will occur as I continue to finalize these translations and understandings.

While definitely not stating that the entire testimony was meaningless or incomprehensible (neither had Dorothy), Peter inferred that some sections may have been more idiosyncratic (or not entirely successful to begin with) while recognizing that copresence at the utterance may have provided many contextual cues to the listener. These cues were not available to us, listening to the recording months later in Peter's and Lillian's kitchen.[47] For his part, Ray G. Thunderchild claimed to have little difficulty in understanding the speech; although we did not attempt a close translation due to time constraints, Ray's verbal translation of this discourse both differed from, and resembled in some respects, my and Dorothy's written translation as well as Peter's two verbal paraphrases. My discussions with each of these translators have led me to exclude, for the time being, major portions of this narrative from my thesis until further analysis is feasible.

As I have indicated through the above account, some of the things people talk about during testimony may not be deeply meaningful to most (or, perhaps, any) members of their audience. Community members negatively disposed to Pentecostalism point this out when they complain about people telling "some story you can hardly understand," or "stories about what they did that day." Such remarks support the hypothesis of a Pentecostal register that must be learned to allow understanding. As Simon Coleman (2006:42) discusses, the notice we may take of periodic failures of meaning (particularly by those who are generally known for making meaningful statements) calls our attention to the constructed nature of meaning generally.

---

[47] This is not meant as a critique of the elder, but more of a metacommentary. Both Peter and Dorothy agreed that the elder was an effective orator, as befits the special role he plays in the church, as a key elder, and family patriarch for the church and community.

Peter maintained that, in spite of difficulties in understanding some sections, overall the elder's utterance (that I was describing earlier) was powerfully meaningful and (as Dorothy agreed) a rhetorical success in many respects. Peter also called attention to a meaning-making prefix which Dorothy and I had overlooked: how God's *mercy* (kisemanito) is the animating source of the healing (*cf.* Minde *et al* 1997:16-17). Dorothy and I had placed the emphasis on the theme of the elder's *faith (*tâpwetamowin) and had not even included the "mercy" particle in our translation, rendering kisemanito simply as 'God.' (A literal possible translation of kisemanito as 'Merciful God' is simply too clunky to my ear, while use of kisemanito is relatively frequent, smooth, and unmarked.) This example shows how shades of meaning can be lost in translation.

To review, although I have by no means discussed all the relevant codes, frames, or genres for the religious events, I have aimed to provide some background for the chapters to follow. I have also discussed problems involved in translating the utterances that I will present later in the thesis. To close, I shall note an interesting comparison from Cree tradition of tongues: to the shaking tent. The shaking tent is still practiced in Alberta, although not in Trout/Peerless. In the shaking tent ceremony, a bound shaman enters a small structure, where he speaks with spirits, often in languages (such as French and English) that he had not learned, and interpreted for those around (See Preston 1975b for a full discussion). This suggests a close affinity between some Cree and some Pentecostal discourse patterns. I would suggest that such correspondences would have a powerful impact on people's imagination. However, history and contingency are required to bring this affinity to full bloom.

Chapter Three: Missionary relations in the history of the Trout Lakes district[48]

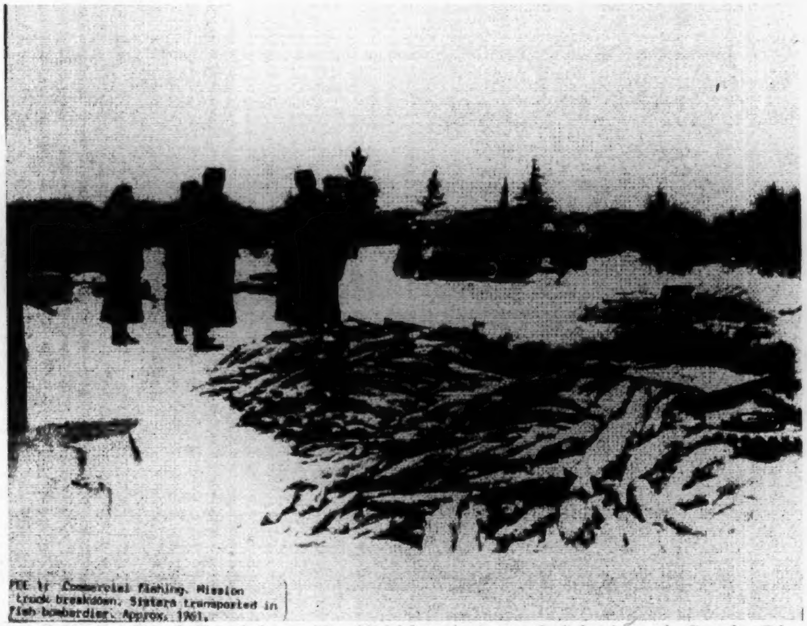

Commercial fishing. Mission
truck breakdown. Sisters transported in
fish bombardier. Approx. 1961.

Figure Seven: Mission Truck Breakdown (Société historique et généalogique de Smoky River [SHGSR])

In the current chapter, I strive, through the use of relevant historical documents and oral history texts, to provide local histories of conversion encounters. I explicate the goals and relations of missionaries and, as far as possible, local people of the time. As Joel Robbins notes, "study of the cultural processes underlying (Pentecostalism's) spread has been beset by a lack of precision" (2004a:118); he calls for further studies on the "mechanics" of its spread (*ibid*:137-8). Much recent anthropological research on missions marries participant observation to archival research with a view to conducting ethnography both on the natives' and the missionaries' cultures (Keane 2007, Meyer 1999, Robbins 2004b; see also Patrick 2003 for a linguistic anthropology example). Accordingly, in this chapter I focus on the historical development of communities in the

---

[48] I thank Neil Reddekopp and Nathan Carlson for reading and commenting on earlier drafts of this chapter, and for sharing their knowledge and documents with me.

Trout Lake district since the 1870s, including an emphasis on early missionary activity and the first conversions to Christianity during the two decades surrounding the turn of the 20th century. I also focus on the subsequent transition (or re-conversion) in the district: as people converted from Catholicism or Anglicanism to Evangelical and Pentecostal forms of Christianity, beginning in the 1950s and 1960s. Understanding each of these early phases of conversion is critical for understanding the contemporary articulation of Christianity with local culture and society. This chapter historicizes the contemporary phenomena I will explore in chapters four through six, by looking at the historical context of Christian conversion in the area.

This chapter will also bring forward contextual data on structural/economic transitions in the community, occurring roughly concurrently with the major periods of Christian conversion and reconversion (*c.* 1900 with initial baptisms, treaty and scrip; and *c.* 1960 with the expansion of resource industries, transition to settled communities, schools and missions). I assert that the documents and utterances I explore in this chapter are vital to understanding religious practice in Trout Lake today.

The major organizations sponsoring the Northwest missions, the Oblates of Mary Immaculate (OMI) [Roman Catholic] and the Church Missionary Society (CMS) [Anglican] are well represented in the story of Trout Lake. During the 1880s, both the CMS and the OMI established mission schools in the vicinity of Lesser Slave Lake (first reached by Methodist and Catholic missionaries in the 1840s), which became the bases for subsequent missionary activities in the regions of Whitefish, Wabasca, and Trout lakes during the 1890s. As the activities and context of these missionary organizations have been relatively well-documented,[49] my goal in this chapter is not to summarize organizational histories. Instead, I provide new data on missionary activities in the Trout Lake area specifically, beginning in 1891.

As I demonstrate, the history of other, later, relevant organizations (notably the Christian Missionary Alliance (CMA) church and various other Pentecostal and evangelical groups) is more emergent and contingent, and is focused more specifically on the study district. The latter organizations have less secondary literature to provide context for their activities in the region than do the CMS and OMI, so I am also relying on the writings of Catholic missionaries for information on the activities of their Evangelical/Pentecostal competitors. Documenting these missions is a significant research contribution on the history of Alberta, and the history of relevant churches.

In this chapter I will be using missionary records, in concert with oral accounts, to interpret local history. The main contribution of this chapter is to present the most comprehensive account to date of missionary activities in the Trout Lake area. I undertook this primarily by means of extensive archival explorations in 2005-8.[50] Turning to oral accounts, I gathered most oral history data during my fieldwork (methods described in Chapter One). I also used older, locally relevant, oral history transcripts and other data as presented in secondary sources including books (*e.g.,* Meili

---

[49] See Choquette 1995, Grant 1984, Huel 1996, Leonard 2000, Leonard and Lemieux 1992, Levasseur 1995, Sanders 1979, Wetherell and Kmet 2000.

[50] Archives consulted include the following: the Hudson's Bay Company (accessed remotely); Woodland Cree First Nation (Cadotte Lake); Provincial Archives of Alberta; the Alberta Genealogical Society; the Glenbow Museum (Calgary); relevant Indian Affairs holdings of the National Archives of Canada (accessed remotely at the PAA, and at the offices of Neil Reddekopp and Bruce Hirsche); the Catholic Archdiocese of Grouard-McLennan (McLennan); the Société historique et généalogique de Smoky River (Donnelly); the Kent-Drever Collections on Alternative Religions (U of A Libraries); Data Library (U of A Libraries); the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada archives (Toronto); and the Christian Missionary Alliance in Canada archives (Calgary). The latter two archives feature newly available collections relating to Aboriginal missions in relevant regions. Finally, I visited the Girouxville Museum, which holds many Oblate artifacts, including a reconstructed mission altar and a chalice from the Wabasca missions.

1991), unpublished reports (such as Cree People 1985, Metis 1980), theses (*e.g.*, Sinclair 1998), and archival depositions (such as Yellowknee 1990, Yellowknee 1976). I also use the few available secondary sources (such as mentions in church histories) to contextualize this new archival and oral history data.

Many of the missionary records I quote here include views on Indians and Métis that would be regarded by many today as racist. Nevertheless, those writing such passages were not attempting to incite hatred. Rather, for the most part they must be understood as men of their time, trying to live and promote the good life as they saw it (Choquette 1995:234-236). While it is sometimes uncomfortable to read such passages, I feel it is critical to do so: to understand the subsequent flagging of the early missionary churches. As Raymond Huel points out, "The comments that (missionaries) made on the society of First Nations reveal more about the culture and mentality of (the missionaries) and the society they represent than they do about the individuals they are supposed to describe" (Huel 1996:xxv). In recognizing the strengths and weaknesses of different source materials lies the key to balanced scholarship. The depth of misunderstanding between Indian and Euro-Canadian was clear to many missionaries themselves, as we will see.

Fin de siecle: encounters

The period around 1900 was a time of rapid change in northern Alberta. As the fur trade intensified, new arrivals appeared and Christianity became known to many local people. My interviews provide rich data on daily life in this period, which I can only allude to here. During this period, residence patterns shifted away from frequent family moves in the winter, toward small communities of extended family living in log cabins at many lakes and other focal sites.[51] Men often traveled far while women and younger children either remained at one cabin throughout the winter or moved infrequently between a small number of cabins. During winter, male trappers were away from home very frequently. Adjustment to this modified round of production, to suit the fur trade, was eased by the adoption of dog sled technology (as well as, in some instances, horses, sleighs, and wagons). As such, trails became a more notable landscape feature, requiring some upkeep. During the spring and summer people continued to gather as before, in larger groups at fishing (or, later, haying) lakes, in mixed settlements of cabins, tents, and wigwams (conical structures of wood). All these forms of shelter could be equipped with the ubiquitous hand-made stoves and chimneys of mud and plant fiber, which provided light as well as heat. Cabin windows were flour sacks. Tea, tobacco, flour, clothing, and implements were the main trade goods. Alcohol was also an important trading commodity during some periods.

By the early 20th century, Aboriginals in many regions were making "moose milk" (moonshine) and a type of brew that could be made in 24 hours (Gabe Cardinal, quoted in S. Yellowknee 1976:4-5). Trout Lake resident George Noskiye (born around 1900) confirmed that alcohol (homebrew) was also available in Chipewyan Lake and Trout Lake during his childhood (Translation: Peter Thunder):

> PT: When that alcohol first started eh, [oh ya] that's what he was talking about, when you first see drunks eh? Just hollering eh and just making noise. It was scary, when he first saw it.

---

[51] This pattern of residence is also documented by Robert Brightman (2002:14) in late nineteenth century northern Manitoba. Its existence in Alberta is suggested by James Smith (1981) and confirmed by my oral history research.

George's recollections suggest that homebrew was widely available, even in the most isolated regions, in the years prior to WWI. It is unclear if factory-manufactured alcohol was actually sold in the several posts at Trout Lake or neighbouring locales.

Money was almost unheard of in northern Alberta, prior to 1900. Cash continued to be relatively insignificant in many locales for several years thereafter, as trade credit and barter were the main modes of exchange. In some instances, the hunting/trapping mode of production was supplemented by subsistence gardening (typically potatoes and perhaps some other roots or greens) or pastoralism (raising cattle for beef or dairy), as well as sporadic wage labour and handicraft production. The history of this social change is almost invisible, and can be gleaned mainly from ethnographic and oral history sources; yet it was lived in a lifetime by people like George Noskiye. Formal, archival history, while vital to consult, contains only a germ of this story.

The documentary history of the Trout Lake region begins tentatively in the 1870s, with the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC).[52] An image of "Trout Post," dated 1870, held by the PAA (Image B.3053; see Figure Eight), shows a well-established post with multiple wooden structures. Although subsequently neglected by historians, Trout Lake merits mention in Harold Innis' monumental history of the Canadian fur trade. Innis mentions that in 1870 Trout Lake was considered, with Dunvegan and Nelson River, as "a distant post…where flour, pork and pemmican are not given out in rations" (Innis 1999:315-6). While this description (and later ones by labourers at the post) are hardly inviting, Innis' own comparison of Trout Lake to Dunvegan (on the Peace River) is instructive; Dunvegan, albeit in decline, was nevertheless the HBC's headquarters for the Peace River District at the time (Wetherell and Kmet 2000:23). Dunvegan today is an official provincial and national historic site; Trout's historical status is little known to most Albertans.

---

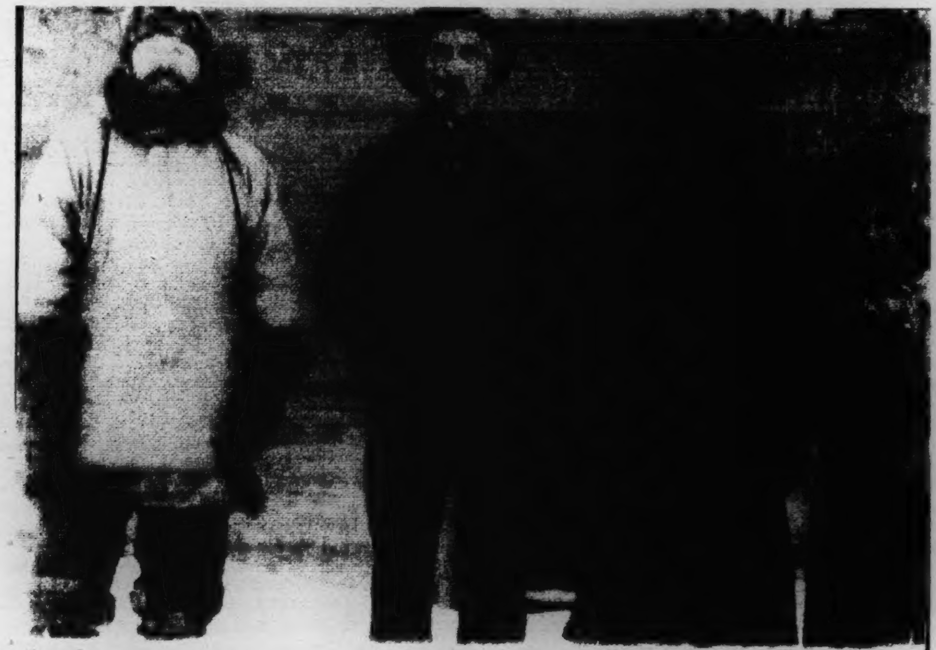
[52] Claims by some local people that posts existed at places such as Long Lake or God's Lake prior to this date (Cree People 1985:4) have not been substantiated in any other document that I have located.

Figure Eight: Trout Post (Provincial Archives of Alberta [PAA])

Prominent Edmonton Métis trader (later senator) Richard Hardisty visited Trout Lake and other northern Alberta posts in 1889 to review the HBC's operations there, and wrote a report of his visit. By 1889, the post having been established for some time, one building was "very old;" the locale, which had been "central," was experiencing poor hunting conditions as some local inhabitants were moving towards Loon River or Fort Vermillion. The report includes a map of the post (which cannot have been accurate as the river flows the wrong direction) and a list of outstanding accounts naming several local Indians who are prominent in the region's early history. Notably this list includes "*ke-yak-ke-qua-we-tum*" ('Everlasting Voice') and his sons, "*O-key-ma*" ('Chief'), "*Oo-*

key-mawe-ash-cha-paye" ('Perfumed Bow'), and "*O-see-mee-mawe*" ('Younger Brother' [see Figure Nine]); these men are ancestors to many people in Trout, Peerless, and elsewhere.

The post's trader, Felix Auger (supplied through Lesser Slave Lake via Whitefish Lake), was an old Métis man with family relations in the community; Auger had resided there for at least 16 years. There was also a free trader, who received goods through Wabasca (Inspection Report: Trout Lake Outpost. HBC Archives. B 358/e/1).



TR 054 OSEMINAS, SA FEMME ET SA FILLE PAIENS, RECOIVENT LE PERE BRUCKERT EN MAUGRANT. 1939.

Figure Nine: "*O-see-mee-mawe*" and his Family with Father Bruckert. 1939 (SHGSR)

A report the same year by Hardisty for Sturgeon Lake (another post in northern Alberta) also mentions Trout Lake. In that report Hardisty recommended that no credit should be given to Indians at Sturgeon, Trout, and some other posts, as these Indians did not pay their debts. Such reports, from the dawn of recorded history in the region, paint a picture of local Aboriginal people both cooperating with and subverting the control of outside interests over their lives.

During the middle to late 19th century, a small number of people residing in the Trout Lake district may have came into contact periodically with missionaries from Lesser Slave Lake and Lac la Biche (where a Catholic mission was established in the 1850s). While a priest may have visited Trout Lake in the 1870s (Philippot, quoted in Reddekopp 1997:6), the first recorded visit was in 1891 by Fr. Alphonse Desmarais. Many of the Catholic records of the subsequent period describe the struggles between Catholic clergy and Cree spiritual/temporal leaders ("sorciers fameux"), including some of those named above in the HBC census.

Regarding Fr. Desmarais' visit (from Lesser Slave Lake) to Wabasca and Trout Lake, in February, 1891, the annals of Mission St.-Martin record:

> 'Having just returned from Sturgeon Lake, Fr. Desmarais received an order to put on his snowshoes and go to visit Trout and Wabasca lakes, an immense country that has never been trodden by a missionary. The families who live there are relatively numerous, scattered here and there, without a fixed dwelling, living in tents by hunting and fishing. Poor people: a lot have of them never seen a priest and so call to him with all their wishes. Others, on the contrary, are terrified to find themselves in the presence of the man of prayer, and they go still deeper ahead of him into the bush: they don't want to renounce their fathers' way of praying; many, especially at Wabasca, have seen the Black Robe at Lac la Biche, and are baptized; but far from the house of prayer, with no one to guide them, they live more or less like the infidels who surround them, and their children are not baptized' (Anonymous ("annales"). n.d.:ii). -Translated by Clint Westman and Gabriel Asselin.

During this visit, Desmarais performed 31 baptisms and six marriages (Reddekopp 1997:8).

The second missionary visit to Trout, in 1896, demonstrated the already dualistic nature of local religious practice: Bishop Emile Grouard arrived belatedly from

Whitefish Lake to save a man presumed to be a *wîhtiko* ('cannibal monster in human form'). As Grouard and Fr. Dupé related the testimony of the Métis trader Auger (whom they called "the best man in the region"):

> 'Having left from Wabasca with his wife and two of his children to come see his father who lives here, he was on his way taken by a crazy idea. He imagined that he was going to become a *wendigo*, that is to say, eater of human flesh. The women and children trembled with fear; the men were no braver. Nevertheless the sick one was welcomed charitably enough: they even tried to cure him in the fashion of the country. As he expressed feeling a glacial chill in his entrails, they made him sweat profusely. The illness not disappearing, they had recourse to the ministrations of a famous sorcerer, named *Wekimaw Atchabeu* ['Perfumed Bow']. This fellow came with his drum, his medicines. He did so much and so well with his blowing, singing, howling, drumming, that the sick man became totally crazy' (Grouard 1923:338-9). -Translated by Clint Westman and Gabriel Asselin.

The incident recounted above occurred in Auger's cabin at the heart of the settlement.

Ultimately, the suspected *wîhtiko* was killed (by a family member), decapitated, and buried in a spot well known to most Trout Lake residents today. The main burial site is covered with logs, several hundred yards from the spot where his head was reportedly buried. It appears that manifestations of *wîhtikowin* ('*wîhtiko*–ness') were common throughout northern Alberta during the years surrounding the signing of Treaty 8 in 1899-1900 (Carlson 2005, Leonard 2000:102). The tension this epidemic created, between local people, "sorcerers," police, and clergy, may have symbolically mediated an overall tension caused by the increasing hegemony of the latter two groups throughout the region.

In spite of the increasing relevance of outsiders, there is strong evidence that local people (especially in isolated regions) were largely self-reliant during this period. Fr. Dupé's 1896 missionary visit to Peerless Lake and nearby Long Lake (the first recorded missionary visit to either place) resulted in few baptisms. Dupé's efforts to convert a large group in this area were unsuccessful due to the influence of Perfumed Bow on this group (Reddekopp 1997:9). Such traditional leaders retained a substantial power base.

Jimmie Meneen, baptized at age 6 at Trout Lake in 1896, describes the local religious scene of his youth:

> I remember we all used to get together every year to have a lodge and give offerings to the creator. A lot of people were specially gifted, but the church destroyed that. Still, a lot of these powers are coming back… The powers were never meant to be used for bad purposes but now they are. A long time ago medicine men fought with each other. It's best to keep quiet about your power. Chiefs were spiritual men with powers (quoted in Meili 1991:62).

It is interesting that Meneen blames "the (Catholic) church" for destroying Native spirituality in the area, given that this church is now the local denomination that has tasked itself with finding a rapprochement with Native Spirituality.

In reality, Meneen's remarks confirm the negative view of early Catholic missionaries regarding traditional spirituality; this negativity planted the seeds for the subsequently successful diabolization of traditional spirituality by Evangelical/ Pentecostal groups. Overall, it appears that early Anglican and Catholic missionaries did not take the powers of the "sorcerers" too seriously, except insofar as the sorcerers continued to hold sway over deluded locals. Nevertheless, it is clear from reports of missionaries during the first half of the 20th century that traditional celebrations continued to occur on a regular basis. Still, many or even most priests and other missionaries in northern Alberta prior to the 1960s or later, viewed Indian tradition as a vulgar distraction at best, or sinful at worst (A. Auger, quoted in Yellowknee 1968, Waugh 1996:143).

Church and state in the early 20th century

While Euro-Canadian hegemony was felt strongly in many regions of northern Alberta within a few years of Treaty 8's signing (in the form of residential schools, land seizures, and hunting restrictions), the Trout Lake region was somewhat beyond the full reach of the Canadian state until several decades later. During this period, while Aboriginal missions elsewhere in the north generally moved away from an ambulatory mission model as Indians settled on reserves, ambulatory missions continued in the Lesser Slave Lake Interior well into the post-WWII era.

During the early 1900s, both Catholic and Anglican missionaries were making nearly annual winter tours from Wabasca to the many inhabited lakes to the north and south of that location. [53] Also by 1900, HBC outposts in the Trout Lakes district (at the south end of Trout Lake and, later, at the northeast end of Long Lake) were supplied via the Wabasca HBC post. During the first years of the century, the fur company *Revillon Frères*, operating out of Edmonton, opened up a post at Trout Lake and later one at Long Lake; both of these were later taken over by the HBC [Reddekopp 1997:17]. By 1918, even relatively remote locales such as Chipewyan Lake and God's Lake were the seasonal homes of free traders, and could be reached by horse and wagon over trails cut in the bush (While 1918:1;3). Together with the establishment of Anglican and Catholic mission schools at Wabasca and Desmarais in the 1890s, these factors demonstrate how

---

[53] The years around 1900 saw Catholic and Anglican missionaries establishing permanent missions in Wabasca and reaching several major habitation sites in the interior region, such as Loon Lake, Lubicon Lake, Cadotte Lake, Bison Lake, and Fish (Haig) Lake for the first time (Reddekopp 1994:12-15). It appears that Anglicans were somewhat delayed in reaching Trout, with Archdeacon C.D. White arriving by 1909 at the latest (Goddard 1991:12-13). However, many Anglican records were lost in a fire at their mission in Wabasca, which makes tracing their work somewhat more difficult than that of the Catholics.

Trout Lake became a hinterland of Wabasca-Desmarais (and, ultimately, Edmonton[54]) during this period of intensifying contact with Euro-Canadians. The region continued as the site of multiple competing trading posts throughout the mid-20th century.

For some local inhabitants during the early 20th century, such changes involved sporadic participation in wage labour; however, this was delayed somewhat in isolated regions such as Trout Lake, and may have been more common among Métis residents and transients. Fred Noskey, a Métis man from Lesser Slave Lake, recalled freighting by wagon from Grouard to Trout Lake (through Peace River, Cadotte Lake, Lubicon Lake, and Loon Lake) around 1910:

> When I freighted to Trout Lake it cost $1 to $2 a night to stop there, but when the feed ran short towards spring, then it was $4 a night. Trips to Trout Lake were bad, there was only a barn which resembled a corral; no chinking, just sticks on the roof and the barn was never cleaned. It cost $4 a night and I had to sleep in the barn with the horses (Noskey 1981:16 [accessed in WCFN archives]).

Other individuals spoke about their (or their parents') long days working for farmers near Peace River (though this was more common further west at Lubicon and Cadotte lakes), or of cutting trails and survey baselines with an ax. It may have been this type of experience in the labour market that encouraged many Métis to move deeper into the bush, and to identify more closely with their Indian kinsmen.

With the establishment of the Bigstone Band in 1899, to which many Trout Lake area residents were to be gradually admitted, the trend towards administration from without was amplified. Such administrative decisions set up a two-way flow of migration in the area. Some people left the hinterland in ensuing decades to be close to schools and services, and to reside on reserve land; others (particularly Métis and

---

[54] In 1905, Trout Lake Post came under direct control of Edmonton within the HBC system (Innis 1999:305).

Nonstatus Indians who could not reside on reserve, did not receive schooling, faced increased hunting restrictions, and may have felt vulnerable to conscription during wartime) appear to have sought out a freer life in the hinterland.

By 1900, the presence of Métis people was an established fact in most of northern Alberta. While they formed distinct communities at some sites (including Lesser Slave Lake and Lac la Biche), elsewhere most Métis were more integrated into Cree communities (as the example of Auger, the Métis trader who retired in Trout Lake, shows). In recognition of the blurred cultural and linguistic boundaries between Métis and Indians – particularly in isolated regions (Edwards 1999:xii, 56) – in 1899-1901, most individuals were allowed to choose whether they wished to be considered Indians (for the purpose of Treaty) or Métis (for the purpose of "scrip," paper redeemable for cash or land). In the isolated communities each of these options was to prove problematic.

The Trout Lake region was not visited by the Treaty 8 commission or Métis scrip commission; however, the Report of the Commissioner for Treaty No. 8 states as follows:

> There yet remain a number of persons leading an Indian life in the country north of Lesser Slave Lake, who have not accepted treaty as Indians, or scrip as half-breeds, but this is not so much through indisposition to do so as because they live at points distant from those visited, and are not pressed by want. The Indians of all parts of the territory who have not yet been paid annuity probably number about 500… but as most, if not all, of this number belong to bands that have already joined in the treaty, the Indian title to the tract it covers may be fairly regarded as being extinguished (Canada 1900:21).

So it was that, in general, Indians of the region were arbitrarily linked with the population at Wabasca.

There has since emerged a revisionist history speculating that most individuals or families in the isolated communities were "from" Wabasca or Lac la Biche, and that was why they were linked to Bigstone. While some migration in this direction did occur in the late 19th century, anthropological, archival, and oral history research alike suggests a long-standing Cree population in central northern Alberta, around the Wabasca River, including Trout Lake (Smith 1981; Russell 1990:16-46, Cree People 1985:5). Moreover, the Trout Lake HBC post was founded before that at Wabasca (Reddekopp 1997:5) and was considered "central" (as Hardisty wrote) prior to 1889.

The Trout Lakes district received official visits, by both a police party and by an Indian Agent, during the years prior to WWI. By this time, many individuals around Trout Lake post had taken treaty and been enrolled with the Bigstone Band. However, other people to the north of the post had not taken treaty and lived more traditionally. In 1911, Indian Agent Harold Laird reported:

> From Trout Lake Post we took a trail following the west shores of Trout Lakes. To the north of these lakes are a number of smaller lakes – Good Fish, Equisetem, Long, Round and Kidney Lakes. At Equisetem Lake there was an encampment of Cree Indians, under Chief Everlasting Voice. I counted 11 teepees and would judge that the Band numbered between 45 and 50 people, none of whom have ever taken Treaty. I had a talk with the Chief, and have no doubt that he and his Band could be induced to enter Treaty, if the Department so desired.

A handwritten note in the margins of Laird's report reads: "Wait till Indians ask to be taken into treaty" (INAC RG10, Vol. 3979, File 156710-31: 2 [accessed from Alberta Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development]). So, no band or reserve was created following this first visit by an Indian Agent, or on subsequent visits.

In spite of the initial, hesitant, establishment of a "Trout Lake Band" (which only had one member), the policy of centralization at Wabasca prevented the establishment of

Indian Bands or Indian Reserve communities in the interior. This delayed the overall development of the interior region for several decades, resulting in a continuing slow loss of population to Wabasca.

Beginning in the 1930s, local leaders (notably Colin Trindle) began making a concerted effort to have the communities recognized and their lands protected. As with similar efforts at Lubicon Lake, proposals during the 1930s to survey reserves came to naught in spite of apparent political will to solve the problem. The intervention of WWII was one factor in many of these promises and budgetary allocations being forgotten in official quarters. That the efforts of local leaders at this time were unsuccessful does not diminish their significance in local political consciousness.

As nominally Indian and Métis groups became ever more mixed, it seemed to some bureaucrats that the pure Indian had disappeared. During the 1940s a considerable effort was made to remove several hundred individuals in the interior from the Indian Registry on the grounds that they were not living as Indians, or had ancestors who had taken Métis scrip. Many of these individuals, or their descendants, were later reinstated; however this purge tended to further weaken efforts to create local Indian Bands or to set aside Indian Reserves in the region (Goddard 1991:21-27). Flowing out of this, due to the relatively large number of Métis and Nonstatus Indians in the region (who were considered ineligible for federal funds for schooling) and the isolation of many local Indian families (who did not reside on reserve or even in one place), people in the interior were less likely than others in more established communities to attend residential school prior to the 1950s.

Over time, most families did accept treaty or scrip, either traveling to Wabasca or periodically receiving payment around Trout Lakes. Nevertheless, this did not result in a population that had uniformly either taken treaty or become Christian. Charles Mair, traveling through Wabasca in 1899, stated that at least 25% of the local inhabitants were "pagan" (1999:138); presumably this percentage was higher in outlying regions. Church records show that a large number of "pagans"[55] persisted around Trout Lake until approximately WWII. Indeed, many local leaders continued to actively resist both the treaty and church, which they saw as inter-related.

In a 1968 oral history interview, conducted by Ray Yellowknee, Wabasca area elder Augustin Auger recalled his 1907 travels at age 13 with a priest (Fr. Pétour), touring the many lakes north of Wabasca:

> From there we went to a place called Island Lake. That is where a man named Cut Wing (Kiskatchanes) was staying with the family we were visiting. Cut Wing did not want anything to do with religion. In the morning we went there. This man, his name was Mayatchan, and his wife whose name was Sarah were at the home. There was a young woman staying there. She had told her aunt before she died that she wanted to get baptized. Her aunt was very religious and had never had a man. The girl grew up in the bush and she was very religious and lived the good life, but she did have a man at one time, but he had left her. The aunt passed away when she was by herself, all alone. Kiskatchanes (Cut Wing) he was sitting there, and he really hated religion. He told the girl, "Use your own mind; the government and the church are trying to control you." I helped out at the baptism (quoted in Yellowknee 1990:54).

This text appears to show that "religion" ('Christianity') was inherently attractive to some people in the bush, and perhaps especially so to women. Furthermore, "religion" seemed to be propagated not solely by priests, but rather to some extent by elders, so that those who were not baptized could still live by its precepts. Others, however, still encouraged potential converts to "use their own mind" instead of turning to God.

---

[55] This is following the missionaries' tendency to consider as pagan anyone who had not been baptized, without regard to the likelihood that those who were baptized also carried on traditional beliefs and practices.

Father Edouard Petour, omi
at Wabaska
1904-1909,
and 1931-1935

Figure 10: Father Petour (SHGSR)

Auger's account further demonstrates that some of the success of Christianity may have resulted from the tendency of missionaries to denigrate existing cultural practices, weakening the power base of traditional leaders:

> The priest and I later went to a place called Rabbit Hills. There was no road. I walked ahead on snow shoes, and he followed on dog team. As we were walking the northern lights were running wild. I told him, "Ghosts are dancing." The priest said, "You crazy Indian, those are not ghosts, that is just a reflection of the ocean. There are no ghosts dancing there. You men that are Indians; you are stupid; everything that you do (R. Yellowknee 1968:55).
>
> We saw a lake and we saw a pole that was carved near the lake there. Near to where a man lived. It was after dark. An older man lived there and he had a young girl as a wife. She looked about 11 years old. The girl was playing on the floor. That was where they slept and she was barefooted. The man's name was Kisagan. This man was upset because the priest was telling him that he had stepped on the law having a young girl for a wife. The priest was very angry. He told Kisagan that when he returned home he would send the police over to see what they would find in his home. Kisagan told the priest, "They will have a hard

> time to take me. This is not a child, this is a woman that I am with." We left about noon the next day.
>
> There had been a pow wow there in the fall; the poles were still there. The priest grabbed these poles and tried to break them. It was late when we saw the carved and painted pole. We ate supper there. After I had finished chopping wood for the camp fire the priest asked me, "Have you finished with the ax?" He took the ax from me, and I heard him chopping something. What he had done was chop down the carved and painted pole. He chopped it into 3 pieces. He told me to take the chopped pole and put it on the toboggan to bring back to Chipewyan Lakes (R. Yellowknee 1968:56).

Here again we see an emphasis, not just on correct metaphysical beliefs and shunning idolatry, but also on sexual morality, backed up by an appeal to science and the power of law enforcement. The contempt in which the missionaries held the Cree spiritual leaders is evidenced from the former's frequent use of the appellations, "jongleur" ('clown') and "le culte des fétiches" ('pagan idolatry'), which are seen throughout missionary writings.

Like Cutwing, many traditional leaders in the area continued to view accepting treaty and conversion with distaste. In a 1980 interview, Cutwing's daughter Bella Beaver explained how Cutwing had "hated for a long time to become a treaty" and only did so when he was helpless because of age. However, Cutwing seems to have become more open to Christianity than to taking treaty. He was eventually baptized by Catholics; however, this did not stop him from later speaking at length with, and accepting ministrations from, the Anglican, White, in 1918. Other major leaders, such as Everlasting Voice, never did adhere to treaty, while his sons, Okemow, Osimmeemas, and Perfumed Bow, were at least 70 when they did so (Reddekopp 1997:18).

As to Perfumed Bow, the renowned sorcerer who previously had "beaten his drum and pretended to foretell the future" (Anonymous ("annales"):46), by 1903 he had been baptized not once but twice:

> 'In order to make himself Catholic, *Wikimatchabew* ['Perfumed Bow'] had to abjure Protestantism, since he had been baptized at [Fort] Vermillion, as well as renouncing sorcery, which it appears he was not asked to do by the minister who had baptized him' (Annales:46). -Translated by Clint Westman and Gabriel Asselin.

This foregrounds the bitter conflict between Catholic and Protestant clergy in the region in targeting each other's converts, which continues in a modified form to the present.

As the subsequent passage states, "John" Wikimatchabew went on to care for a family of three *wîhtikos* from Lac du Diable ('Devil's Lake' [*i.e.,* God's Lake], a place which, the annalist notes, had well earned its name). It is interesting that this curer of *wîhtikowak* was able to ply this vocation after his baptisms as well as before, with the full consent of the church(es). Like the 1896 events, when local people tried to avail themselves of both Grouard's and Perfumed Bow's ministrations, these events point to the similarities in local people's spiritual practice, both before and after conversion.

Ambulatory missions

Many remarks of contemporary elders underline the idea that early conversions did not result in a major re-ordering of community and spiritual relations. Remembering Archdeacon White's ambulatory missions from the early 20th century, centenarian George Noskiye stated in an interview that White did not really make any converts in the region (in spite of the numerous baptisms White had performed, including that of Mr. Noskiye himself). Similarly, George Netowastenum indicated in an interview that the importance of his Catholic baptism had been minimal, equating it to just a gesture (of the cross) which had no practical impact. Further, Solomon and Sarah Sinclair indicated that neither the ambulatory missions of the Catholics or the Anglicans had any effect in curbing people's reliance on indigenous ceremonies to order their spiritual and communal life.

As Sarah (a practicing Catholic) stated (in remarks translated by Peter Thunder) about the missions' effects on traditional religion:

> It never used to effect anything, eh? They used to have round dances and pow-wows, and.. the priests never used to mind they used to join them in there eh? Ya, her dad [Edward Letendre] used to have a round dance at the narrows there eh?

Similarly, George Noskiye (a practicing Pentecostal) stated (translation: Peter Thunder):

> Ya, there was no one that used to go around telling about the bible back then eh? Ya, that's how they used to depend on roots and sticks and stuff like that eh?

George indicated that people would only see a missionary once a year at most (others indicated once every five years), with no change in their Aboriginal spiritual practice between times. Indeed, it is clear that there were very few visits during and after the years of WWI, in particular. Although George himself was baptized as a child (around 1905), he remained (as Peter translated it) "really into worshipping idols," until his conversion to Pentecostalism in the 1960s. This is a major theme brought forward by contemporary Pentecostals, who contrast their present, frequent, and participatory worship with intermittent, directed, and (they say) meaningless ceremonies of the past.

In some other cases, it appears that the reception of Christian practices may have been quite profound, in spite of the missionaries' absence. George Auger spoke of the old calendars people would use in the bush, allowing them to "keep Sundays." Many people who grew up in the bush recalled how their parents read the bible in the bush. Ida Houle reported that her family also "kept Sundays:" they didn't do anything on Sundays in the bush, except pray after quieting the kids down. Others reported having bad luck when they broke this guideline (*cf.* Sinclair 1998:24). So there was some success on the part of missionaries in attempting to reorder people's day-to-day lives.

During this period there grew up spontaneously a distinctly Cree reception of Christianity, in which some individuals combined the approaches of Christianity with the insights of their earlier vocations (*cf.* R. Yellowknee 1990:190). For example, Joseph Cardinal stated that his grandfather incorporated a bell into his way of praying in the bush, as he had seen in the mass.

As William Auger said of religious practices in the 1940s:

> I guess they used maybe tea dances too eh? Most of the time. I've seen it when I was a little boy. [oh ya?] They believed, I guess some people believed like that, not all of them eh? [mmhmm] There's some people already that in those days they started believing in God eh?

In spite of some interest in Christianity, the open fighting between Catholics and Protestants began to wear Native people down. Speaking in church during my fieldwork, Assistant Pastor Emile Houle stated that people had initially been happy to hear the Gospel; however, with fighting between denominations, "The Gospel changed and became Religion." Denominational rivalry may have obsessed the clergy, but was not a major factor in preventing Aboriginal people from undertaking spiritual or temporal activities together, or forming marriage bonds to one another (Yellowknee 1990:75). In spite of increased contact with missionaries, there is ample archival and oral history evidence from the region to suggest that Christian doctrine and formal religious affiliation were not considered to be of major importance locally for most people. Each denomination was generally limited to one (or perhaps two in exceptional cases) short tour(s) during the winter at most, wherein missionaries visited as many people as possible (though not everyone) at a wide array of locales over a one-month period.[56] During these visits, ministry was often provided to those who considered themselves to be members of the other "flock." Often this extended to baptizing or marrying such individuals as well.

Missionaries employed music, pictures, and schema to good effect, both in Wabasca and on the ambulatory missions. Mair commented that the Anglican services at Wabasca were held in English and Cree, with the Cree hymns being "soft and sweet" to his ears (1999:138). While the missionaries' task was made easier during the 20th century by the relatively high level of Cree literacy in the region (and by the small but growing number of people in the region who had attended mission schools), clergy of both denominations despaired that the locals were not giving up their indigenous religious practices. More significantly, even those whom they considered their most enthusiastic adherents were often, in the clergy's view, poorly informed as to the doctrine of their professed faith.

From each period of missionary activity, quotes can be found to show that the missionaries despaired that they were actually teaching their charges anything:

> 'In all our northern missions, one finds the same fervour: the same simple, naïve piety, the same throng of people despite long days of work' (Grouard 1923:406). -Translated by Clint Westman and Gabriel Asselin.
>
> That night the Indians at Chipewyan Lake had a 'Lame dance', a relic of heathen days. I think I am true in saying that the only Indians I know who keep away from these dances, (and they number very few) are Protestants. The Indians know that for a true Christian to go to a 'lame dance' is inconsistent (White 1918:2).
>
> There were three houses (at God's Lake), in which lived about 18 people. That night I had a service at which all who were there attended. Some of these Indians

---

[56] White in 1918 traveled over 400 miles in 23 days, coming into contact with more than 200 Indians, giving 11 services, and baptizing four children (1918:5).

> were Protestants and some Roman Catholics, but all seemed very ignorant, and did not even know it was the right thing to kneel down when we prayed. But they listened very attentively when I preached. I preached to them again the next morning and also Baptized one of the children. This was my first visit to God's Lake, and the first of a missionary in four years. They were very friendly and appreciated the effort I had made to come and see them and speak some good words to them. I came away with the feeling that the only way to really help these people to become true Christians was to live right amongst them, for there appears to be none of their own number strong enough to take a lead. But how was this to be accomplished? (White 1918:3-4)

> 'If these Métis were pagans in fact, because they knew nothing of religion, or if it even existed, we can say that they were Christians in desire, and altogether disposed to welcoming the priest as soon as he would come among them. The danger being that, in their ignorance, they listened to the Protestant Minister, if he came first' (Anonymous ("Conquête"). n.d.). -Translated by Clint Westman and Gabriel Asselin.

> 'Think of it, there are still pagans in this country… for whom we struggle with the Protestants… The Catholics living here are mostly Catholic in name, perhaps not seeing much difference between the Catholic Priest and the Protestant Minister' (Fr. Habay to Mgr. Langlois. Nov. 11, 1938. Wabasca file. AGM]). -Translated by Clint Westman and Gabriel Asselin.

I will also discuss other such remarks from later periods. Such comments demonstrate the challenges the missionaries faced, even after multiple generations of mission work and baptism, in making their message relevant to local people.

On the part of the Aboriginal people, the reception of the Christian message was mixed; this contributed to considerable social breakdown. As David Starr told me:

> What changed the Native towards alcohol was that… well, the fear that they drove with religion, the teaching, they call it teaching, but they promoted the worst thing that was going to happen to you when you're dead…You're going to go straight to the Devil and you'll be in this lake of fire forever.

Christians to this day have tended to see alcohol as a pre-existing problem they must rescue Natives from; however, it may be that alcohol was more a symptom of the broader problems of culture and religious contact (including those caused by Christianity), afflicting Native people.

By the 1930s, missionary activities in the region were increasingly successful, at least in quantitative terms as regards number of baptisms and other sacraments performed. Perhaps the increasing number of baptism may reflect a Cree belief that sacraments would protect them from sorcery. During this period more children (although likely still not most or all) began to spend some time (in some cases just a few months) at the mission schools in Wabasca. Missionaries conducted an annual search for children ('la recherche des enfants') by means of a large freight canoe carrying two paddlers, the missionary and his cargo. Increasingly, this search would be conducted by airplane between the 1930s and 1950s.

During the interwar period, some converts to Catholicism and Anglicanism appear to have been moving away from Cree traditional practices, to embrace their church's teachings. For instance, current Pentecostal leaders spoke of how they had been trained by parents (who were Catholic or Anglican) to avoid witchcraft and follow the teachings of the church. It appears that the Catholic church prepared the way for the present middle-aged generation of Pentecostal leaders, some of whom attended residential schools and who reported feeling very strong attachment to the Catholic church as adolescents; this included a desire to become a priest in the case of one future Pentecostal Pastor, Joe Okemow.

There is some Catholic archival evidence that the Anglicans began to mount a stronger mission in the area of Trout Lake in the 1930s, through the work of a Rev. Sandercock (whom the Oblates were not above referring to as "the Cock," even when writing in French). This corresponded with some apparent personal animosity among local (Wabasca) Indians towards the chief Oblate in that settlement, Fr. Beuglet, relating to his officiousness and poor Cree, as well as to an apparent land dispute involving the church. Perhaps these difficulties for the Oblates in Wabasca allowed the Anglicans to press for an advantage in the mission field. Anglican prospects to the north culminated in 1939, when Colin Trindle (who had been, since 1936, the Bigstone Band councilor representing Trout) requested that a Protestant school be built in the community.

In response to the growing threat from the Anglicans, the Catholics began to lay firmer plans for a permanent chain of resident missions in the area, so that "Mister Protestant will have to clear out of the country" (letter to Mgr. Guy from Fr. Beuglet, May 31, 1935. AGM. Wabasca 1911-1936 file). In spite of this missionary strategy, Trout and the surrounding lakes remained isolated during much of the year, with the HBC and Revillon only trading in the winter at Long Lake during this period, and private traders providing some additional services. While the Oblates had limited access to a plane (flown by nationally known bush pilot and former WWI aviator, Wilfred Reid "Wop" May) by 1933, their typical modes of transport remained canoe and dogsled.

In 1940, Fr. Bruckert constructed a mission house on the site of Francois Auger's cabin by the Trout River, near the old HBC post at the south end of Trout Lake. This was the first structure built for church purposes at Trout, Peerless, or Chipewyan lakes. Nevertheless, there was still to be no permanent mission or major attempt to ensure that all children were educated. Both churches maintained an ambulatory, rather than a residential, missionary strategy in the region. During this period, Bruckert estimated the population north of Wabasca as including 158 Indians and 109 Métis (both categories being somewhat leaky), of which 220 were Catholics, 25 Protestants, and 22 "pagans." Of the 45 families in the area, 22 had been married as Catholics; the remainder were

Protestant, mixed, “to be regularized,” or “concubinages” (Bruckert 1939:1). While open to dispute, these numbers show a trend towards Catholic dominance of the mission field.

TR 002 MAISON-CHAPELLE ACHEVEE ET IN-
AUGUREE A PAQUES 1940. ELLE
DEVAIT SERVIR AU CULTE A TOUTE
LES VISITES DES MISSIONNAIRES
JUSQU'EN 1957.

Figure 11: Chapel House (SHGSR)

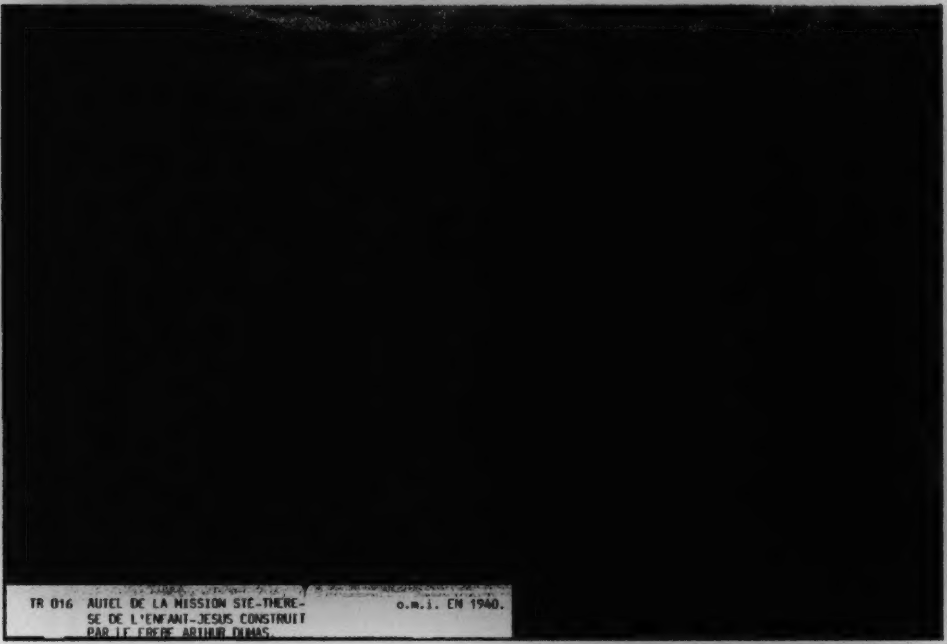
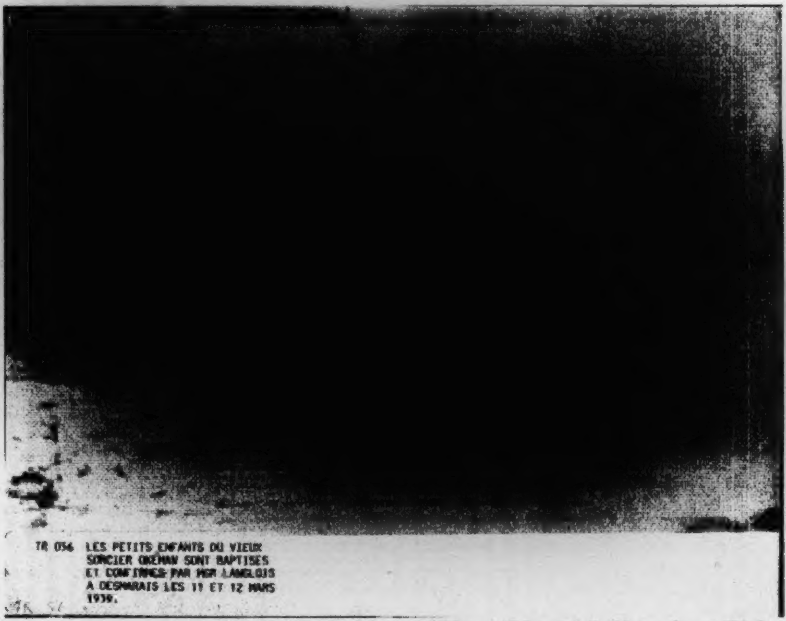

TR 016 AUTEL DE LA MISSION STE-THERE-
SE DE L'ENFANT-JESUS CONSTRUIT
PAR LE FRERE ARTHUR DUMAS
o.m.i. EN 1940.

Figure 12: Chapel House Interior (SHGSR)

By the 1940s, the region was becoming somewhat more closely linked to the outside world. During this period, a small number of residents of the isolated communities enlisted to fight in WWII (at least one, Francis Laboucan of Cadotte Lake, had fought in WWI). Others traveled to the Peace River district to work for farmers. Probably a more widespread impact was felt when Arthur Fisher began trading into a number of the communities during the 1930s, opening seasonal stores (notably at the current site of the community of Peerless Lake). Fisher inaugurated a commercial fishing industry, which provided summer wage employment for some local men. Even so, most people continued to live in a semi-traditional seasonal round.



TR 056 LES PETITS ENFANTS DU VIEUX
SORCIER OKEMAW SONT BAPTISES
ET CONFIRMES PAR MGR LANGLOIS
A DESMARAIS LES 11 ET 12 MARS
1939.

Figure 13: Children of Pierre "Napesis" Okemow at Wabasca (SHGSR)

While many elders now living in Trout and Peerless did not attend residential school, others (particularly those with close family ties to Wabasca) aged 65 and over did do so. Some of these individuals have begun to receive compensation for the harms they suffered during this time. Joe Okemow reported not being allowed to return home when his mother was dying. Bernard Cardinal emphasized the physical hardship, poor food, and gruff teachers he had experienced, asking me: "Would *you* like to go through that? Would *you* like to eat lard?" Many consultants stated that residential schools and the negative feelings associated with them were the main reasons people left the Catholic and Anglican churches throughout the north (*cf.* Grant 1984:205).

As one man said about others who had left the Catholic Church:

> I think the same thing happened to them that happened to me. [schools?] Ya. Ya. Maybe the same thing happened. [hmm] I don't know, I never asked them [ya], but it probably would happen, the same thing as happened to me eh? Because, like my sister, Martha,[57] that lives at Whitefish Lake, [ok] that's what he told me. He told me he couldn't think of worse.. places, when he was in school. How they treat him, school, eh? Maybe that's why, he stepped back (*i.e.,* from Catholicism), maybe that's why. He's a Christian.

The "torment" this man and his sister experienced in residential school had made them distrust God, he stated, since God's emissaries were evil.

David Starr described the hours and hours of reading, so that one was "sick" of learning about religion. He also describes poignantly the total nature of this institution:

> So that's where the big harm was done… by the European when they started gathering the younger children and putting them in these residential schools. The growing years were already lost, and… when a person went through the system, like they booted you out when you were 16.. and that was it. Be it, at what stage of development you were, you were just kicked out. Now, and that's the way it operated.
>
> But what happened then was you lost the love of the family, and you lost the *training*, and how to survive on the *land*… it was also taken away, lost, because of us being year-round in these residential schools. And that's where all the harm came in, [mmhmm] today. As we grew up, we didn't have those family ties. Sure, being normal human beings you know and uh, to populate naturally, you got your own children, but you didn't know how to raise them, you didn't have that tight family love that you generally grow up with as a child. You couldn't take that and use that with your own family because it just wasn't there. It wasn't there.

---

[57] "Martha" is a pseudonym, as is "Whitefish Lake."

> And so that changed into how you had to survive in the residential school. There was a survival system in the residential school… Ah, being in the group of your other peers, the same age and the same background, older, say about 50 of them all forced to live in the company of a close environment… And everything was done as a, growing up… well you literally fought your way through it, to survive.

Traumatic stories such as these are the key experiences associated with "religion" and "school" in the minds of many northern Alberta elders.

William Auger recalls his first time learning about the schools, and his subsequent journey to Wabasca:

> WA Vandersteene was alone when he came to our home. He told us about the school in Wabasca eh? He brought some pictures with him eh? I guess kids saw them eh? Some birds, all kinds of pictures eh. He told us that kids made them eh? I can't believe that kids could make that kind of.. birds like that eh, but I never..
>
> CW It kind of made you want to go to school?
>
> WA Ya that's why I wanted to.. he was planning to take us over there I guess [oh ok] but finally they took us over there but I was kind of too late. I was 12 years old when I went to school eh? [oh ok] There was no school here eh? They took us by plane eh? They sent a big plane. [to collect all the kids?] Ya, then we all got in there, took off again. I was kind of lonely when I saw, when I leave my community. [mmhmm] There was just a few houses! We circle around once there, we saw the community from the air.. smokes, few places eh? We have to leave our community now we don't know what's up over there eh? I mean I never saw Wabasca before eh? [hmmm] It was a big place by that time. When we got there, there were 63 boys I got to meet.. new friends, about 63 of them.

To some extent, acquaintances developed in schools contributed to the development of a political activist cadre, and joint political action between communities.

In the end, it was likely more the practical difficulties associated with running and funding the residential schools (particularly in the context of a large, unfunded population of Métis and Nonstatus Indians) that led to the introduction of a local school in Trout, rather than the ethical or pedagogical problems of the former. Another major factor in the opening of a Catholic day school in the district was the impending threat that a new group of Protestant missionaries would do so, if the OMI did not act first.

Following Bruckert's construction of a mission house (Mission Ste.-Thérèse) at Trout Lake in 1940, the Oblates slowly moved towards consolidation of their missionary presence there. In spite of their increased use of airplanes to transport children to Wabasca for residential school, the Oblates were facing a situation in which many of their flock in the isolated communities sent their children to the Anglican school. Similarly, many families considered by the Oblates as Catholic had some children baptized as Protestants, due to the priests' infrequent visits. The answer to this appeared to be a residential mission and day school, to be located at Trout Lake. Accordingly, the church entered into negotiation with the HBC to buy the HBC's five buildings there. These negotiations were hastened when rumours began to spread that "the minister from Laboucan Lake" ('Lubicon Lake' [*i.e.,* Clarence Jaycox, or possibly Rolland Smith]) was attempting to rent the HBC post at Trout, and had promised local people a school there for the next winter. To foreclose this, the Oblates purchased the HBC post in 1957. The first resident priest was Fr. Roger Vandersteene, whose arrival in the district coincided with the opening of a similar day school at Loon Lake, by the Rev. Clarence Jaycox of the evangelical Christian Missionary Alliance (CMA) church.

Resident missionaries and community consolidation

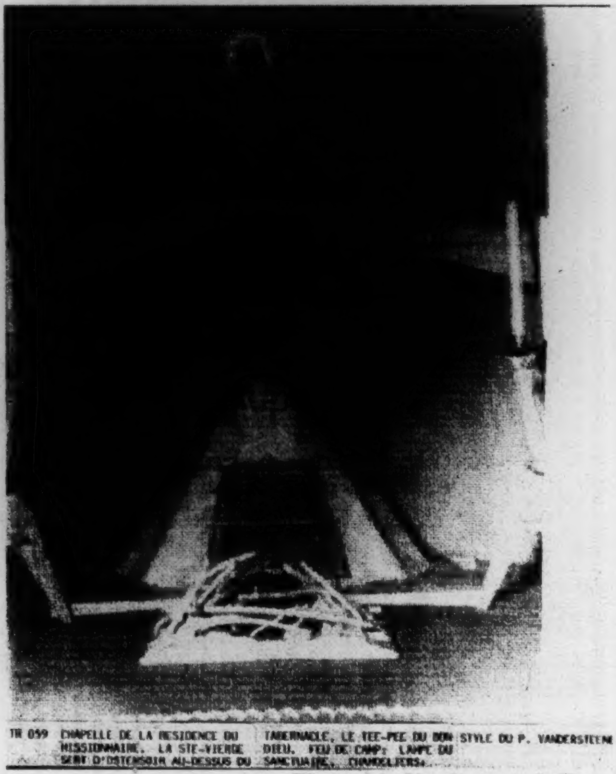

TR 059 CHAPELLE DE LA RESIDENCE DU MISSIONNAIRE. LA STE-VIERGE SERT D'OSTENSOIR AU-DESSUS DU
TABERNACLE, LE TEE-PEE DU BON DIEU. FEU DE CAMP: LAMPE DU SANCTUAIRE. CHANDELIERS.
STYLE DU P. VANDERSTEENE

Figure 14: Vandersteene's Teepee Altar (SHGSR)

The Oblates' purchase of the HBC site enabled a school with ready-made facilities.[58] Vandersteene, from Flanders, had previously begun to experiment with Cree liturgy and alternate worship styles throughout his 12 years in northern Alberta, including on some visits to Trout. His Cree was excellent and he was known as a man who really cared for his charges. As the school became established, the mission was also staffed with nuns of the Sisters of Sainte-Chrétienne, who assisted in teaching and running the school and mission throughout the 1950s and 1960s. In 1961 the newly formed Northlands School District took over jurisdiction; the board paid the costs of the school, which even so was still staffed by religious. Prior to road access in 1970, the mission provided medical services, relief, radio communication with the outside world, and limited retail services (Gregoret 1980).

---

[58] The post had been abandoned since the outflow of people from Trout to Wabasca was making it unprofitable (Dolphus Sinclair, quoted in Metis 1980: 358).

TR 050 SOEUR VICTORIA, s.s.ch., AVEC
SES ELEVES EN 1962.

Figure 15: Sister Victoria and her Students (SHGSR)

A similar process of mission establishment was underway at Loon Lake (where Jaycox had begun his ministry by 1956) and, later, at Peerless Lake as well. The ministry of Jaycox and the Christian Missionary Alliance (CMA) church in postwar northern Alberta has not been the subject of analysis, except for some discussion by Earle Waugh (1996), and a mention in a CMA history book (Reynolds 1992).[59] The CMA is an Evangelical (but non-Pentecostal) church founded in the USA in the late 19th century. It has had a strong emphasis on personal sanctification and missionary outreach; the CMA does not view mainstream, non-Evangelical, churches as truly gospel-inspired.[60]

---

[59] I am the first scholar to access newly available Aboriginal resources held by the CMA's national archive; I have also accessed searchable CMA publications online.

Jaycox is a WWII veteran from rural upstate New York, who had felt a call to minister to Natives in northern Canada. He and Ruth appear to have been among of the first missionaries to take extensive advantage of northern Alberta's growing network of road transportation during the postwar period; he also did his share of traveling by dogsled, wagon, and other more traditional means. He arrived in Fort Nelson, BC, in 1954[61] [Ekback 1977]. Ft. Nelson was the CMA's first mission in what would become a small but symbolically important mission field for that church. The inspiration Jaycox and his family brought to their mission field is evident from over fifty years of service by this family, including missionary efforts in northern Alberta by Jaycox's wife, son, brother, and sister-in-law. Some of the Jaycoxs' children were born in northern Alberta.

During the same period as the CMA's mission was inaugurated, other new groups of missionaries were also coming into the north. For example, Cree-speaking Mennonite teacher-missionaries were active in the 1950s and 1960s at Calling Lake and Chipewyan Lake. Also, during the 1950s, Rolland and Thelma Smith ran an independent evangelical mission and school at Little Buffalo Lake.[62] In 1954 (Goddard 1991:34), the Smiths had begun the first resident mission and day school (although it also had a dormitory) in the isolated communities, at Little Buffalo Lake. Many of my acquaintances at Cadotte and Little Buffalo were educated at this school, including

---

[60] The early development of the CMA, with a focus on Canadian activities, is described in Reynolds 1981.
[61] Not 1933 as Waugh (1996:153) writes.
[62] Jaycox himself had hoped to pre-empt Smith and build a school at Little Buffalo Lake or Lubicon Lake; however, he was unable to obtain necessary support from the CMA, leading him to focus on Loon Lake instead (CMA Archives. Acc. 2006-01. Box 4. File 40).

Joseph Sullivan Cardinal, who was taught to play hymns on the organ for a recital at the mission.

Although the Smiths were Quakers from Ohio (initially leading Vandersteene to the erroneous assumption that Jaycox was also a Quaker), their mission was not supported by or affiliated with any one denomination. In fact, while in the north they associated with local Baptists (later leading Vandersteene to the erroneous assumption that Jaycox was also a Baptist), and Smith ran a non-denominational evangelical radio broadcast. After they returned to America in 1957, their work in Little Buffalo was taken up by the Northland Indian Mission and, later, the Northern Canada Evangelical Mission (NCEM).[63] The Smiths' experience demonstrates that the Jaycoxs were not alone in their enterprise, but were part of a growing trend of non-traditional missions, to an area that had not yet been the focus of residential missions by the established churches. In fact, at least one early colleague of the Jaycoxs (George Dunn) in the Alliance mission to Loon Lake also later worked at the independent mission previously founded by the Smiths at Little Buffalo, and then became involved with the NCEM elsewhere. The examples of the Smiths and Dunn, changing denominations or organizations, suggest that institutions were less important than personal networks in this new mission field.

Within a few years of his arrival in Ft. Nelson (after ministering briefly at such places as Peace River, Wapiti River, and Lubicon Lake), Jaycox had found a more permanent mission field in Loon Lake. He also became the chair of a CMA field committee for Indian missions. It is worth considering the establishment of the Loon

---

[63] See "Mission paved the way to better Native education." *Peace River Record-Gazette*. Section 2, Pg. 1. July 5, 1978 (accessed at AGM).

Lake mission in some detail, as it has strong relevance to the couple's (less documented) later activities at Peerless/Trout.

One of Jaycox's early visits to Loon Lake, by horse, was recorded by Gerald McGarvey (a CMA pastor from Beaverlodge, AB) for the *Alliance Weekly*. McGarvey's writings are relevant to my thesis for the insights they give into the views of CMA missionaries regarding Aboriginal culture, as well as the nature and validity of the Roman Catholic mission in the area:

> One day we suddenly came upon a clearing where a deserted village stood. It remained as a tragic and gloomy testimony that Indians had lived there and died – without a ray of gospel light. At the outskirts of the village, which had once been home to a large number of Indians, was a cemetery. On every grave was a triangular-shaped spirit box topped with a cross. Wrapped around the cross was a ribbon of the lucky color designated for that particular year by the medicine man. The spirit box is believed to keep the spirit of the dead one warm and dry; the ribbon is for luck; but what is the cross for? Evidently they have adopted it from what they have heard or seen of Roman Catholic practices, but to them it is only one more superstitious symbol. Our hearts were heavy as we continued our journey, heavy with the kind of sorrow a person feels looking at someone else's hopelessness (McGarvey 1956: 5-6).

This type of internal propaganda does not reflect the reality of fairly well-established Catholic (and Anglican) mission in the region, including over 60 years of education and literacy promotion, nor the sophistication of Aboriginal Spirituality; however, it was necessary to maintain the fiction that the CMA was spreading the gospel for the first time into new parts, and to maintain a tradition of rhetorical excess against Catholics and Medicine Men alike.

Also on this journey, Jaycox and McGarvey attempted to visit Peerless Lake and Trout Lake, but were unable to travel through the muskeg. They had to content themselves with missionizing to the residents of Loon Lake through an interpreter, and with the aid of Cree language phonograph records containing a spoken gospel message.

Like others before him, McGarvey emphasizes the simple openness of the Cree, whom he saw as befuddled by medicine men, including reliance on the "sun dance":

> This is a pagan dance that honors not God but Satan. Only the power of Christ can break the bondage of superstitious practices which they continue to observe because of fear in their hearts. The oddly carved poles and many colored ribbons decking these arbors are not symbols of festivity and gladness but of slavery (McGarvey 1956:6).

In spite of their being backward and tubercular, these Indians needed and would reward a missionary presence, McGarvey wrote.

In McGarvey's writing one sees a glimpse of the Evangelical/Pentecostal party line on Aboriginal ceremonies, which remains relevant in Trout and Peerless today: this view states that traditional ceremonies are not merely fetishistic, improper, or ineffectual (as previous missionaries had taught); they are Satanic, with an emphasis on the power of fear. In spite of its shortcomings, McGarvey's contemporaneous report seems in many respects more reliable than a later piece, looking back at Jaycox's mission, published in an American CMA organ (Foster 1971).

Based on his 1971 visit, CMA missionary K. Neill Foster describes Loon Lake in the 1950s as having been "an untouched, thoroughly pagan village without Christian influences of any kind" (all quotes Foster 1971:10). This is at odds both with the district's ecclesiastical history (including the Catholic influence earlier recognized even by McGarvey), and the growing importance of the oil industry around Loon Lake in the 1950s. Admittedly, Foster does in passing describe past rites such as the Tea Dance ("the focal point of Indian spirit worship") and the Shaking Tent ("the most supernatural ritual among them"), in a manner that resembles reality more than McGarvey's description of the "sun dance;" however, Foster's writing is still couched in terms of spiritual warfare, stating explicitly that the voices emanating from the shaking tent were "demons pretending to speak with the voices of the dead." Foster's writing becomes quite lyrical at times such as when he suggests that, following Jaycox's arrival at Loon Lake, "the drums talked for days." However, this and other claims are undermined by his overall lack of historical accuracy, such as his not mentioning that Jaycox was no longer in the district by 1971, and that Pentecostals had by then neutralized most of the Alliance's hard-won gains.

Foster differs from McGarvey and others in one important respect: his claim that "when the Holy Spirit came the shaking teepee wouldn't work anymore" (Foster 1971:10) is exceptional in Evangelical/Pentecostal theology. This claim is put in the mouth of "Old Albert," said to be a former medicine man and recent convert, who does not appear in any other documents I have found. In light of problems with Foster's narrative, noted above, and the unique nature of this comment, I am choosing to downplay "Old Albert's" observation. Certainly his suggestion that spirit power stopped following the advent of conversion resembles previous, scientistic, missions such as those of the Catholics and Anglicans; however, Old Albert's viewpoint would not be espoused by many Evangelical or Pentecostal practitioners (be they non-Native missionaries or local believers). Overall the Evangelical/Pentecostal consensus has been that these rituals continue to have a terrible power, as is suggested elsewhere both by McGarvey and by Foster himself. The Jaycoxs' views also fall within this mainstream.

Having conducted preliminary visits to Loon Lake, Jaycox established a school there in 1958. During the same year, the CMA's Western Canadian District Conference formally adopted an Indian mission program, recognizing the need for language training as well as for candidates who could endure physical hardships without complaining. This missionary effort originally envisioned focusing on mission fields across the north, where (it was believed) no missionary had ever preached the gospel. Jaycox, for instance, reported that he had discovered a previously unknown Tribe of Indians at Lubicon Lake. Such claims (which seem strange to those more familiar with the region's history) were made to promote the mission, raise funds, and to (implicitly) castigate Catholics and (to a lesser extent) Anglicans. A similar approach is seen in the writing of a CMA missionary in the NWT: he wrote that the Slavie (*sic*) people had never received the gospel, since no white man spoke their language "*except a few priests*" (CMA Archives. Western Canada District Conference Sept. 1957. Acc 9808. Box 13. File 534. Italics mine). This shows the utter disdain in which the CMA held the Catholic missionaries.

Although their lives and works have not attracted the attention that Vandersteene's did, nevertheless Clarence and Ruth Jaycox remain modestly heroic figures within the CMA in Canada, and among local Protestants. Clarence has a school named for him at Loon River, and could be considered the founder of both Loon and Peerless lakes, as modern communities. Also, their work is the subject of several paragraphs in an official history of the CMA in Canada, written by an insider historian (Reynolds 1992), who refers to them as, "outstanding among all who had a part in (the) hard and discouraging tasks" of the CMA's Indian/Eskimo mission (306).

Working at both Loon and, later, Peerless, the Jaycoxs began with a focus on school and basic medical care. Ruth Jaycox, who met Clarence at the CMA Bible School in Nyack, NY, told me she had always wanted both to marry a missionary and to become a missionary. At Peerless and Loon she struggled against great difficulty as a fundraiser, missionary, wife, and mother, also serving as a teacher and nurse. The Jaycoxs were assisted intermittently by other couples (including Clarence's brother and his wife) and single people,[64] who acted as teachers and labourers as well as missionaries. They also received financial and personal support from the established CMA congregations in the farming communities of the Peace River region, and elsewhere. However, the missions remained reliant on support from the CMA district. After 1961, when the Northlands School Division took over the Loon Lake school, CMA mission affiliates continued to work as teachers; these teachers were paid through the school board. This approach appears to have subsidized the costs of mission work considerably. Finally, the Jaycoxs also ran a retail store and fur-buying depot, which may also have subsidized the mission during some periods.

Within a few years of their arrival at Loon, the Jaycoxs could boast of reasonable success. They had good attendance at church and school, with some enthusiastic converts; this was in spite of ongoing concerns such as alcoholism, pagan practices, and the pervasive "ignorance" reported by previous generations of missionaries. The initial successes in Loon Lake became the basis for further success among kin networks ranging to Trout and Peerless. Although exhorting readers of CMA periodicals to pray for his wife and growing family, and complaining of the isolation and prevalence of homebrew, Jaycox also recounted tales of several conversions. A most important early conversion was that of a former drunkard, but one who was also the best educated man in the region, and who became a charismatic leader. This story is an important one in understanding the subsequent rise of Pentecostalism.

---

[64] At least one couple met and married through their participation in the CMA missions to Loon and Peerless. Some collaborators went on to other Aboriginal mission fields in Canada and the USA.

The focus of the CMA Indian/Eskimo mission, modeled on concurrent international missions to places such as Vietnam (and also functioning as a training ground for such missions), was the creation of "indigenous" (meaning autonomous and self-financing) churches, to ensure that the missionary work would not become a long-term drain on sponsoring congregations. This is quite different than the Catholics and Anglicans, who have had a much more limited focus on developing lay leaders and recruiting Natives into the clergy. As such, a major CMA strategy was to begin cultivating indigenous leaders, who would then allow the original missionaries to be redeployed elsewhere. While the CMA's objective to have self-supporting churches in the region never came to fruition, their model of pastoral leadership development was certainly more successful than anything adopted by missionaries in the region previously. As White had noted four decades earlier, it was necessary for a missionary to live among the Cree and share their society. The willingness of Evangelicals to identify, promote, and ordain indigenous leaders (who could then provide liturgy and counseling in Cree) was to become a major factor in the success of the subsequent development of Evangelical/Pentecostal movements in the region. The Jaycoxs claimed they were successful in establishing church communities because people could see the love that was in the Jaycox's hearts, and needed the services (including medicine) they could provide. No doubt their indigenous leaders also assisted them in spreading their message.

One of Jaycox's earliest assistants was Louis Auger, of Loon Lake. Auger was born at Loon Lake, but had relations at Peerless and had grown up partially in that district. He received schooling outside the region. Auger traveled with Jaycox to Peerless Lake and Trout Lake beginning in the middle 1950s, where he interpreted for (and visited kin with) Jaycox. Later, Auger married a convert, Dorothy Letendre, of Peerless Lake, thus benefiting from further family connections around Peerless.[65] The CMA was forced to rely on such figures (people who were bilingual and literate in English) because their missionaries at first did not speak Cree or read syllabics. Also, the CMA had a relatively small corpus of written Cree resources, although they did distribute bibles in Cree. This put a great deal of authority in the hands of the interpreter/assistant, which was to weaken the CMA's long-term organizational viability in the region, and diminish the importance of the CMA's doctrine of slow sanctification.

During the 1950s, Catholic missionaries (who had never established a residential ministry at Loon Lake) attempted to win back converts at Loon, but were for the most part unsuccessful. One of these sallies came with the Jaycoxs on furlough to the USA, in 1958; it was reported in the CMA organ, *Western Worker*:

> Brother and Sister Frank Neufeld report that the Catholics have twice visited the place in the last 10 days. They have been doing everything possible to turn the people against the Mission and much prayer is needed, but Brother Neufeld reports that God is giving Complete victory…
>
> Each family was forbidden, and strictly so, to come to any services that we held. Apparently this caused a rebellion and some told the priest to go home. One of the faithful attenders had been educated in a Catholic mission and when the priest forbade his children to go to church or school he really became upset. He told him that during his time at the Catholic school he never once saw the priest use a

---

[65] In a recent presentation on conversion and community cohesion, at an international conference, Virginie Vaté (2008) also remarked on the importance of family networks and indigenous social structures in spreading Pentecostal and Evangelical Christianity in Chukotka, Russia.

> Bible. This attack against the Word was really their undoing (*Western Worker*. Nov-Dec. 1958:3. CMA Archives. Acc 9808. Box 13. File 534.).

The Jaycoxs, similarly, reported that the Catholics did not distribute Cree bibles as a major part of their ambulatory mission strategy. While it is undoubtedly true that the Catholics adapted their strategy to respond to ongoing the presence of illiteracy in the region, it is also true that Catholic distribution of bibles and other religious literature is well-documented in the region, promoting literacy in syllabics among bush-dwellers. What is interesting is the way this trope (of the Catholics not using the bible) is seized upon by Evangelicals promoting a more doctrinaire approach to the Word.

The key factor in CMA success was the denomination's choice to launch its mission in peripheral areas, where the Catholics and Anglicans had not become well-established, and to build personal relations with those who felt neglected by the priests. They also had a strong line of argument, based on biblical theology, which was becoming more convincing and important to local people than the Catholics may have expected.

By the early 1960s, it was clear that Jaycox was the key figure in the CMA's Indian Mission efforts in Western Canada. His efforts at Loon continued to meet with success; meanwhile, CMA success in other areas (including other missions that had been established or expanded by Jaycox himself) was inconstant and personnel inconsistent. The number of CMA Indian/Eskimo mission stations dwindled in the late fifties and early sixties, with fewer new start-ups. In 1962 the CMA statement on Indian missions referred to Loon Lake as its "home base," and mentioned the contributions made by Jaycox's "Indian brethren" there, in spreading the gospel (Western Canada District Conference. 1962:5. CMA Archives. Acc. 200601. Box 5. File 91). Following Jaycox's move to Peerless in 1963, Peerless soon became acknowledged as the CMA's flagship ministry, as the denomination's strength on Loon would ultimately begin to weaken. This trend underlines the Jaycoxs' personal importance in their field.

Having begun to consolidate the RCC's advantages in the region over its long-time Anglican rivals during the post-war period,[66] Vandersteene experienced the missions of Jaycox and his "fanatical deacon" (Louis Auger) with increasing distress. In spite of the RCC's original success in acquiring the Trout Lake post for a mission-school, the CMA was soon able to make up for their late arrival on the scene. Beginning in the late 1950s, the expansion of the oil industry in the Loon Lake/Red Earth Creek region heralded closer transportation links with the outside world. By 1958, a road was proposed (and later built) from Red Earth, northeast towards the Wabasca River, passing within a few miles of Peerless Lake. Vandersteene viewed this as continuing the transportation links that had allowed "the ministers" (who tended to travel by car over the poor, but often passable, oil roads and wagon trails) to move from Peace River to Lubicon Lake to Loon Lake. The ministers, Vandersteene wrote to his superior, were dogged and had a system that pulled people in. The ministers' system contrasted with Vandersteene's own difficulty in interesting people in the gospel, and his increasing struggles against the alcoholism and materialism he saw in the communities.

Hearing of the CMA's increasing success at Loon, Vandersteene resolved to try to persuade the Treaty Indians living in an informal settlement around Fisher's store at Bald Hill (site of the current community of Peerless Lake) to move towards Trout for their schooling and religious instruction. Most declined, even as Jaycox and Auger began to reach Peerless through informal means.

---

[66] I have been unable to locate any documents confirming a direct linkage between historic Anglican adherents in the region, and subsequent CMA followers.

Vandersteene reported to Mgr. Routhier in 1960 that, in spite of a few local Protestant Indians who did some proselytizing, and notwithstanding the indifference and materialism of the majority of locals, he detected a certain movement towards the Catholic life in the area. Even so, Vandersteene himself writes of his despair at the spiritual condition of the majority of local people. Part of the blame must be placed with Vandersteene himself, even given his openness to Cree spirituality. Waugh (1996:285-6) documents the problems facing Vandersteene's liturgical, institutional, and architectural innovations, as well as the omissions and essentialism inherent in Vandersteene's conception of Cree Religion and its supposed relationship to both Catholicism and to Cree identity.

In any event, any perceived movement towards Catholicism was swiftly overshadowed by CMA incursions to Peerless and, later, Trout itself:

> 'The ministers from Loon Lake who came to do a pastoral visit stayed four days, visited nearly everyone and gave three religious services. Saturday night at Salomon Sinclair's they had a full house. Sunday morning at 10, they had a service with a few people and again at 7 p.m. another one… which was cancelled for lack of interest' (Vandersteene. Letter to Fr. Guimont. April 5, 1960. AGM. Trout Lake file). -Translated by Clint Westman and Gabriel Asselin.

Writing on the same day to Mgr. Routhier, Vandersteene reported how he had attended one service, which featured a "fairly baroque" interpretation of Adam and Eve's story.

Vandersteene noted that the minister relied on an interpreter from Loon (Louis Auger), who interpreted poorly but spoke well, and who had family relations in the area. Vandersteene nevertheless felt (erroneously as it turned out) that his work was safe:

> 'I think that the people have a bit of sense (but these are Indians) and there is no danger… the service was long and difficult without any religious sentiment… the danger remains always in the malcontentment of a few. There are some here who would believe a dog if it was not affiliated with Rome' (Vandersteene. Letter to Routhier April 5, 1960. Trout Lake file. AGM). -Translated by Clint Westman and Gabriel Asselin.

The latter statement appears to belie Vandersteene's earlier remarks about a certain move towards the Catholic life, as do his other statements about only having one or two real Catholics in the area. My oral history research confirms this: Peerless Lake elder Paul Okemow attended church occasionally during this period, and told me in 2005 that few people were present at most mass celebrations during the 1950s and 1960s.

The fact that both Vandersteene and Jaycox ran stores and/or relief efforts in conjunction with their respective mission activities did not prevent either from poking fun at the similarly mercantilist behaviour of his opponent, and the supposed materialism of the opponent's charges. For instance, Vandersteene alleged that Jaycox was successful mainly because of his better quality food and clothing for Loon Lake school children, and his efforts to find work for their parents. When Jaycox set up shop (literally) in Peerless, Vandersteene's existing arrangement with the free trader at Trout, to provide credit for Catholics, was undermined by Jaycox's own entry into the fur market in the district. People would switch religious affiliation momentarily to get the most credit. Vandersteene blamed materialism and ignorance for his difficulties, rather than any inherent attractions of Protestant doctrine, underlining his belief that the Cree were not mainly dogmatic. This may have been a significant miscalculation, as the Evangelicals claimed to use Christian doctrine and the Bible as their main tools. Vandersteene's fear during the early 1960s was the prospect of a mass relocation by Trout Lake residents to Peerless, with a corresponding religious shift to the CMA. Thus, he fought steadily to maintain a modicum of services in Trout, while paradoxically weighing in against road access that would mean unmediated contact with the outside.

By spring, 1960, Jaycox had attracted the attention of many important local leaders around Trout and Peerless, including Edward Letendre and Pierre Okemow. Nevertheless, when the former's wife died, though she had been a convert of Jaycox and though Letendre himself had been an early booster of the CMA, Letendre opted for a full Catholic funeral with sacraments. Also during this period, Catholic missionaries continued to try building bridges with local ceremonialists, often participating in their rituals. Owing to Vandersteene's somewhat limiting belief that the *wihkotowin* (as a communal feast) was an analog for the Catholic mass, he and his colleagues may have been blind to what some Cree saw as negative elements of the old tradition. The oft-reported decline in the frequency of traditional ceremonies suggests that the Catholic Church's decision to ally itself with traditionalists in the 1960s may not have been a sound long-term strategy (*cf.* Arthur Lamothe, quoted in Waugh 1996:315-6).

Although Jaycox had proposed to open a school at Bald Hill ('Peerless Lake') in 1960, this plan was delayed. Nevertheless, to Vandersteene, the continued visiting between Trout and Peerless (and nearby communities such as Loon Lake and Little Buffalo, where there were Evangelical missions) constituted a danger. Moreover, he characterized the mission in Trout Lake as "spiritually difficult," due to the "indifference of a large part of the population," in spite of the minority: "a sign of life and faith" (letter to Mgr. Routhier, 22 Dec. 1961. Trout Lake Files. AGM). These remarks may foretell the difficult and divisive situation the RCC would face in the future.

During 1962, Jaycox encountered more success in his visits to Peerless and Trout. In February, Vandersteene recorded the conversion to Protestantism of four women, who had seemed to be strong Catholics. Later, he wrote that the country was "inundated with Protestants from Loon Lake (the minister and six others today)" (Letter to Mgr. Routhier. 22 July 1961. Trout Lake Files. AGM). Still, during this period, attendance at mass was very high (over 100), necessitating construction of a new chapel, inspired by the *wihkotowin* lodge.[67] During the early 1960s, the Catholic missionaries in Trout were committed not only to maintaining a faith community for the devoted minority, but also to maintaining a public presence as *the* face of religion and service in Trout and Peerless, besides attempting connections with Aboriginal spiritual/linguistic practices. Within five to ten years, each of these goals would seem jeopardized.

As Jaycox opened his school at Peerless in 1963, Vandersteene increasingly used military language and analogies to describe the situation:

> 'For many years the Loon Lake minister and his fanatical deacon have attacked Trout Lake, or at least some families related to Louis Auger (the deacon). Up until now the battle went with various results, but for some weeks we have been in a much worse position… Four families are lost and the atmosphere is very troubled. Even if these families are still with us here[68] in body, their spirit is already poisoned. As to the atmosphere, there is a great silence around us that has practically taken all confidence toward the mission.
>
> I wrote to Fr. Baratto[69] asking him to send me all official news and all rumours from Loon Lake concerning the situation at Bald Hill. I really don't know what is happening there but it is something very serious for the Trout Lake Mission. I'm

---

[67] Although it was built, this chapel faced a number of problems, not least of which was that its door faced the wrong direction. It is now defunct, and has been replaced with a newer, conventional structure that incorporates some of its artwork, as well as photos of Vandersteene, a long-serving nun, and two prominent local Catholics, the late Paul and Seraphim Powder.

[68] At Trout Lake, as opposed to having moved to Bald Hill.

[69] The priest responsible for Little Buffalo Lake, Cadotte Lake, Marten Lake, and Loon Lake. The precarious situation of the Oblates at Trout, during the 1960s, was mirrored by those in nearby communities such as Whitefish Lake, Marten River, and Cadotte Lake, where established Oblate missions were also threatened by Evangelical missionaries (Routhier to Vandersteene, June 4, 1965. Trout Lake Files. AGM). Little Buffalo had already lost most of its Catholics during the 1950s.

> really afraid that the mission is in danger as a foundation and that certainly a large part of the population is in danger of losing the little faith that it has' (Letter to Mgr. Lavigne, Oct. 21 1963. Trout Lake Files. AGM). –Translated by Clint Westman and Gabriel Asselin

Indeed, it seemed that the very existence of a community at Trout was threatened, as the new site at Peerless had a school, store, and better access to the outside world. For many, who had come out of the bush to settle permanently only recently, their faith and family linkages dictated in which of the two communities they would live.

Lavigne replied portentously, reflecting, but providing Vandersteene little solace:

> 'In any case, I must pray and have others pray for your poor renegades who are less at fault than the whites but who have some responsibilities all the same. Their mentality, their state of mind [Leur mentalité, leur état d'âme], would be an interesting and revealing subject of study for a doctor in missiology.' ((Nov. 5 1963. Trout Lake Files. AGM). –Translated by Clint Westman and Gabriel Asselin

Lavigne was seeing decades of slow gains in a peripheral mission field lost in a matter of months, and was regretfully aware of witnessing an important historical process.

When the Jaycox family moved to Bald Hill in 1963,[70] the site they chose near Fisher's store (which they would take over), on the shore of Peerless Lake, was located only 13 miles from an oil road and was home to a few families. The establishment of their mission spurred the development of a permanent community at Peerless Lake. Early converts, the families of Harry Quintal and Harvey Houle, came to live nearby the mission, which itself was located on a beautiful upland (Bald Hill) overlooking the lake, which was the site of burials, and is today the cemetery. As Jaycox began to establish a mission and school in Peerless, Louis Auger took over in Loon as the CMA's first Cree pastor; Auger in turn also inspired other Cree men to get involved in the CMA mission as potential leaders.

---

[70] Not 1966, as Waugh (1996:153) writes.

Between 1963 and 1968, Vandersteene and Jaycox continued to target one another,[71] while maintaining their respective bases at Trout and Peerless. By 1965, the situation had stabilized somewhat, although Vandersteene recognized that Jaycox had some strong advantages. For one thing, the success of the Evangelicals seems to have been linked to growing problems with alcohol in the increasingly sedentary communities (Letter to Routhier, May 21, 1965. Trout Lake Files. AGM.) This foreshadows an attitude currently prevalent among Pentecostals that the Catholics and Anglicans "didn't tell people to stop sinning." In fact, Vandersteene and other missionaries despaired against the epidemic of drinking, but could do little to stop it. The more black and white morality of the Evangelists was an advantage here in helping some people abstain.

On a more practical level, several Trout Lake elders were born in the vicinity of Bald Hill. Many camped there frequently and traveled past the new settlement on their way to their traplines, around small lakes to the north of Peerless. Moreover, Jaycox's interpreter, Louis Auger ("who himself also has the spirit"), was the nephew of many of these elders. Auger apparently was particularly anti-Catholic, preaching about the inquisition and against the rich and powerful "dictator" of the Church of Rome (Vandersteene. Letter to Routhier, May 21, 1965. Trout Lake Files. AGM).

During this period, Jaycox made some important converts in Trout Lake itself among Catholics (including Ambrose Houle); however, Vandersteene retained the loyalties of a strong minority in the community, in spite of these "defections"

---

[71] By contrast, Vandersteene maintained positive relations with Cree-speaking Mennonite missionaries, who were residing at Chipewyan Lake during this period (where they ran a store and school, teaching locals to read Cree syllabics). He wrote that he admired these missionaries, who were not overly interested in proselytizing to Catholics, and had much in common with them. For their part, Vandersteene wrote, the Mennonites had nothing in common with "the baptist from Peerless Lake." They condemned Jaycox for his negative attitude and actions, he wrote (Letter to Mgr. Routhier March 17, 1964. Trout Lake file. AGM).

(Vandersteene. Letter to Lavigne, Nov. 23, 1963. AGM). To fight the defections and retain the interest of his flock, Vandersteene received permission from Lavigne to develop a revitalized communion in Cree.

Vandersteene was aided by Edward Letendre and André Noskiye, prominent ceremonialists and healers, who lobbied many community members to preserve their traditional culture and to reject the Evangelical message. Vandersteene himself was able to take advantage of elders' beliefs (*e.g.*, in the healing power of holy water) to maintain some of the mystique of his office (Letter to Routhier. January 8, 1966. Trout Lake Files. AGM). Many Cree retained such beliefs in the power and symbolism of the mass and other practices. This may have prevented some defections (Waugh 1996:156), fitting with Vandersteene's related strategy of holding Christmas masses in private homes by invitation: supposedly according to the *wihkotowin* formula (Waugh 1996:155), but also, coincidentally, closely resembling the Evangelical approach of home prayer meetings.

As a long-term strategy, relying on the *wihkotowin* may have been questionable: Elder Martin Okemow (the grandson of a ceremonialist and in his youth a ceremonial helper) suggested that the tea dance had stopped in the area long before the arrival of the Pentecostals. Thus, the public ceremonies held in 1966 by Noskiye and Letendre with Vandersteene's blessing (the last in the district, known to my consultants[72]) were already somewhat removed from the annual community tradition of the more distant past.

More telling was the loss of one whom Vandersteene had called his best and only real Catholic. Pierre Okemow (Martin's father) at Peerless Lake, had been a kind of hero in Vandersteene's *Wabasca: dix ans de vie Indienne* (1960), and had sent his children to

---

[72] In fact, no one mentioned these 1966 ceremonies to me. Most people stated that the last tea dance in the area occurred in the fifties or before. This may suggest limited attendance and appeal of the final events facilitated by Vandersteene.

Wabasca for communion years earlier (see Figure 13). After allegedly attempting to bargain with Vandersteene for money, Okemow left the church. He then began to tell people that, while it said in the Bible that drinking alcohol was a sin, Vandersteene had never told the people not to drink (quoted in Waugh 1996:157). Pierre Okemow's conversion to Evangelicalism foreshadowed the conversion of his large extended family; Clarence and Ruth Jaycox told me that his was a key conversion for the success of their mission at Peerless, demonstrating the importance of individual contingencies and family groupings.[73]

During 1966, the number of Catholics at Trout Lake continued to diminish due to conversions and increased out-migration, largely to Peerless Lake but also to Loon Lake. Although many people were still interested in Catholicism, Vandersteene seemed to be losing the battle with Jaycox (Letter to Routhier. January 26, 1966. Trout Lake file. Diocese):

> 'This business at Peerless is above all something territorial and familial, but with the intermarriages few families have no kin at Peerless. Currently the Cardinals are seriously tempted. The mother Marie-Anne (a widow) took advantage of my absence during the retreat to visit Peerless and she went there with her mother and her aunt (an Okemow) as well. This fall a procession of her sons all went over there… If they become interested the Noskiyes will too… I can't predict how all this will turn out.' –Translated by Clint Westman and Gabriel Asselin

Such remarks underline the localized nature of conversion, in terms of kinship networks and group pressure.

Vandersteene acknowledged that his mission was in crisis, owing to the appeal of the CMA message. People were able to save themselves "with vigour" in the tent meetings at Peerless, in contrast to the more formal ritualism of the Catholic service. This suggests that local Cree people held a view of spiritual action (rather than contemplation) as primary. Later, Vandersteene described the situation as "a full out revolution" in which he could trust no one; people demonstrated worries and nervousness about the conversions, which "augmented their instability" (Letter to Routhier. June 28, 1966. Trout Lake file. AGM). Perhaps the increasing number of converts made some remaining Catholics doubt the efficacy of their religion and priest in protecting them from sorcery and/or hell, and to seek an active religion that was demonstrably efficacious. This suggests that mass conversions may reach a tipping point where a cultural revolution occurs.

---

[73] Over the course of a few decades, the Okemow family went from training a stream of young men to assist in the tea dance (Martin and Paul), to sending a stream of young people to mission school in Wabasca (Joe Okemow and William Auger), to playing key roles in the CMA mission ('Blackbird' Okemow) to providing a series of leaders and aspiring leaders for the Pentecostal movement in the area (Joe, Jack, Alice, Gilbert). These changes were lived in a lifetime by individuals, such as Joe Okemow.

Also noted in this 1966 letter was an issue that would become of central importance: the explosion of new religious groups (mainly Pentecostal) at Wabasca, and the beginnings of efforts by these Pentecostals to missionize further north (in this case at Chipewyan Lake). In light of the immediate threat posed to the Oblates by the CMA, the Pentecostals' arrival on the scene perhaps did not receive the attention it warranted.

During his 30 years in northern Alberta, the innovator Vandersteene had to content himself with the transition from presiding over a majority church providing the bulk of social services to its isolated parishioners, to being steward of a remnant of Cree Catholic believers living in a more fast-moving, pluralistic world. According to his colleague, Fr. Camille Prosdoscimo (quoted in Waugh 1996:320), Vandersteene had fewer parishioners after 10 years of work than he had had upon his arrival in Trout Lake. Of course, taking a longer view, this would also be truer of the CMA, which currently retains no formal presence in Trout or Peerless and never succeeded in establishing an organized indigenous church anywhere in northern Alberta.[74]

The advent of Pentecostalism

Pentecostalism officially arrived in northern Alberta when a church affiliated with the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada (PAOC) [currently the largest of more than 10 Pentecostal denominations in Canada, besides innumerable independent Pentecostal churches and networks] opened in Peace River in 1955, following a tour of northern Alberta by the PAOC's District Superintendent. The Peace River church was successful in attracting early Aboriginal converts, such as Mrs. Louise Desjarlais, through a mission at "Moccasin Flats" in Peace River (Morsch 1983:70). In spite of this, the subsequently documented work of the PAOC among Aboriginal people in Alberta was minimal. As such, it is unclear if any significant linkage exists or existed between the PAOC and the broader Aboriginal Pentecostal ministry that developed in northern Alberta.[75]

Thomas Miller's insider history of the PAOC notes in passing that Pentecostalism began to grow as a network among Alberta Aboriginal people during the 1950s (1994:277); also noted are the deep fissures and splits which characterized the North American Pentecostal movement during that period (*ibid*:269). What this means is that the growth of Aboriginal Pentecostalism in Alberta was mainly a non-denominational, network-based phenomenon. Craig Candler (1999:78) suggests that the

---

[74] A CMA-affiliated congregation, led by the unordained Forrest Jaycox, persisted at Peerless (and, briefly, Trout) into the 1990s. The building in Peerless that this congregation used has subsequently been used by a series of Pentecostal groups. Nevertheless, the building itself is still called "the Alliance church" by many residents. Similarly, a church at Loon is currently known as "the Alliance church" in spite of having no formal affiliation to that denomination. At other periods, the CMA recognized "Unorganized Indian" congregations in both Red Earth Creek and Loon River.

[75] Most other PAOC churches in northern Alberta towns and cities were established *after* non-denominational Pentecostalism had become established in adjacent Aboriginal communities (*cf.* Morsch 1983).

Pentecostal mission to Wabasca (whence missionaries came to Trout) began in the very early 1960s,[76] almost immediately following the completion of a road to the region; however Vandersteene's letter indicates these missionaries did not experience notable successes prior to the middle 1960s.

As a largely non-denominational movement (at least locally), Pentecostalism has had advantages and disadvantages relative to its established competitors. Indeed, the success of Pentecostalism was itself a reaction to some of the failures or weaknesses of the Catholic, Anglican, and CMA denominational mission strategies. Many of Jaycox's CMA assistants took advantage of their status to become religious leaders in their own right, ultimately moving towards a Pentecostal consensus and directly competing against the CMA. For instance, Louis Auger later became seen as an independent Pentecostal leader, as did John P. Cardinal, who had translated for Jaycox in Trout during the middle-late 1960s (after attending "Bible College" in Slave Lake). Another similar trend can be seen, as early as 1959, in the reliance of the CMA missionaries on cooperation with independent Aboriginal preachers, who traveled from outside the region.[77] Also, many contemporary Pentecostal leaders, such as Joe Okemow, Emile Houle, and Jack

---

[76] According to Peter Thunder, Carl Swanson baptized two key Wabasca locals (John P. Cardinal and John Alook), who became important early Pentecostal missionaries to Trout. Swanson is thus a key figure in this story. Another early missionary active in Wabasca, inspiring those who went to Trout, was Bud Lessard. According to Peter, Lessard had the ability to heal people through his radio show. Another early figure, who may have come through Wabasca to Trout in the 1940s or early 1950s, was William Branham. Branham was a "prophet" from the USA, who traveled by canoe and camped at the HBC post at Trout (according to Emile Houle). Several people around Wabasca were saved in the 1950s and 1960s by such early missionaries, according to Peter Thunder (who lived in Wabasca), but many lost their faith quickly.

[77] This included Vincent Yellow Old Woman (from the Blackfoot Reserve) and Bill Jackson (from Kikino Métis Settlement), who were brought in by the CMA to preach at camp meetings in the 1950s. Jackson preached in Cree at a northern Alberta CMA camp meeting in 1959. Jackson, who had previously traveled widely and done radio broadcasts for the NCEM, later was considered by community members as an original Pentecostal missionary to the region.

Okemow, were brought up in, or came to leadership or support positions through, the Alliance Church.

The CMA's reliance on such local and incoming figures (some of whom had already been trained or saved by Pentecostals, as seems to have been the case with John P. Cardinal) over the long term became a poison pill, hastening the demise of the CMA in the region by enhancing the powerbase of a cadre of charismatic, relatively well-educated, Aboriginal men, with more local knowledge and prestige than the missionaries (*cf.* Garrity 2000:528). This can also be seen in the CMA's increasing use of missionary strategies such as camp meetings: these meetings were susceptible to increased spiritual ecstasy, decreasing centralization and denominational control. All these factors began to play a role in the long-term co-optation of CMA structures into the Pentecostal movement. Through camp meetings and itinerant preachers, this involved a transition from the low-key hymns of the CMA to the guitar and pop-inspired music (even dancing) favoured by later Pentecostals. Major changes along these lines occurred in the regional religious landscape beginning during the middle to late 1960s.

By 1970, neither Jaycox nor Vandersteene were resident in the district, both having moved to Grouard, to continue mission work there along with broader denominational responsibilities in northern Alberta; Vandersteene passed away prematurely later in the decade. Fr. Paul Hernou arrived from Belgium in 1966 to reside at Trout Lake, inspired by his countryman Vandersteene's vision of Cree Christianity. Louis Auger, having followed Jaycox as leader at Loon, now took over Jaycox's spot at Peerless, with "Zamry" ('Jean-Marie') Noskey becoming pastor at Loon Lake. Each was assisted by local leaders as well as visiting missionaries. Seizing on Catholic weakness during this transitional period, the Alliance began a determined assault on the "stronghold of Roman Catholicism" at Trout Lake; however, this assault was overshadowed by the generalized advance of independent Pentecostals into the region.

Beginning in the late 1960s, the efforts of both the CMA and Catholics, to maintain their ground and to build a network of successors to earlier missionaries, faltered in the face of a major advance by independent (Waugh 1996:154) Pentecostal missionaries. While these events are the crux of my history, leading up to my ethnographic study of the Pentecostal congregations presently active in the region, they are poorly documented in archival or secondary literature. As I have shown, this is because most of this network's successes occurred outside (or on the periphery) of denominations, and it is mainly denominations that preserve church records. The archives of the PAOC omit all mention of the isolated communities, or of any major Aboriginal mission in Alberta.[78]

---

[78] To some extent the lack of PAOC records or involvement around Trout Lake may be an anomaly reflecting the local administrative structure of the PAOC. Other PAOC districts, including Ontario, British Columbia, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba, each sponsored long-term ambulatory missions (often using planes or, in the case of BC, boats) to northern Aboriginal communities in these provinces and beyond: into the eastern Arctic and northern Quebec. These missions included long-term investments in bible colleges and teaching tools for Aboriginal people, such as printing materials in Aboriginal languages. In Manitoba (where Cree Indians first heard the Pentecostal message in 1907), organized PAOC Aboriginal missions began as early as the 1920s. In Alberta, however, such efforts were moribund due to Alberta's administrative linkage with the NWT as one large district in the PAOC. As such, any Aboriginal/northern mission in the Alberta/NWT District was generally conceived in terms of the NWT, not of northern Alberta. This resulted in Hay River, NWT, becoming the centrepiece of the District's Aboriginal mission strategy. A large hospital, staffed with Pentecostal doctors and nurses, was constructed at Hay River; this formed the nucleus of a PAOC mission that would grow to include a church, intermittent bible schools, ambulatory missions down the Mackenzie, and a Hay River-based PAOC communications organ. Other PAOC Aboriginal missions in Alberta were comparatively low-key, including the seemingly indigenous establishment of a church at Brockett, AB (Peigan Reserve) during the 1940s and a subsequent attempt by Rev. H. North Peigan to set up a PAOC church among "his people" on the Cree reserves at Hobbema. Such efforts pale in scope relative to concurrently organized PAOC activities in northern Saskatchewan and northern Manitoba, for example. The impact of these latter missions on the general Aboriginal Pentecostal scene in Alberta is unknown, although individuals such as North Peigan had an interprovincial profile, and preached in Saskatchewan at Aboriginal bible schools and camps (PAOC archives).

During the 1960s and 1970s, many institutional innovations occurred both inside and outside of established denominations, aiding Evangelical-Pentecostal missions in the north. These included the creation of Aboriginal Bible schools (such as NCEM-affiliated Kee-Way-Tin Bible School at Lac la Biche), gospel publishing houses focusing on hymnals in northern languages, radio programs, and networks of preachers such as the NAIM (North American Indian Mission), Native Evangelical Fellowship (NEF) and the NCEM. Paradoxically, while related to national undertakings (such as the National Sunday School Mission, Revival Time radio network, and Crossroads telecast[79]) and even global efforts (such as the Summer Institute for Linguistics, founded by missionary linguists and anthropologists), such institutional innovations also enabled the development of a preeminently local leadership cadre, some of whom would act and preach relatively independently of external denominational control.

Improved road access and increased vehicle ownership, beginning in the 1970s, not only allowed missionaries better access to Aboriginal communities, but also permitted Aboriginal people to attend revival meetings held in other areas. Tours of the north by western Canadian evangelist Max Solbrekken (who has emphasized Aboriginal ministry), to places such as Grande Prairie and Slave Lake, are one example of revivals occurring in non-Aboriginal northern communities, attracting many Aboriginal converts (Personal Communication. Gordon Drever. February 20, 2008). More recently, improved access to the internet has also increased access in the communities to the evangelical message. Solbrekken is one whose website profiles Aboriginal healing and spiritual warfare (*cf.* DeBernardi 1999).[80]

---

[79] Beginning in the 1980s, conventional TV evangelist programming was also available in the study region.

It is interesting to note that even PAOC missionaries in the north bemoaned the number of independent Pentecostal missionaries working in Indian country during the 1960s and 1970s. PAOC missionaries noted the low level of known information about such competing groups and networks, and the disdain these independents felt against denominations: even Pentecostal denominations. Many existing records of other Aboriginal-oriented Evangelical networks warn against the hidden dangers of independent churches, demonstrating the perceived relevance or threat of this constituency.

The independent Pentecostal missionaries were able to attract wide notice within the communities they visited, and had some early successes as a result. As Ruth Jaycox stated:

> I think the Indian people… have a tendency to go for the spectacular, they've got to have a show. Where we have more trouble, is the Pentecostals seem to be a flash in the pan. I hate to say it, but it's the truth. They get the people all excited about religion, and then the novelty wears off. It's like a bubble that's burst (quoted in Waugh 1996:154).

Mrs. Jaycox contrasts the Pentecostal approach to salvation as freely available, to the CMA's focus on education, doctrine, and slow sanctification. Some support for her arguments, about the bubble bursting or a flash in the pan, can be seen in the very high proportion of people (some of whom must have been Pentecostal or CMA adherents or raised to be such) currently claiming "No Religion" at Peerless and Trout, as I discuss in Chapter Five.

---

[80] Max Solbrekken World Missions. http://www.mswm.org/. Accessed February 20, 2008.

Ironically, a great many local residents (including adherents of Pentecostalism) now stress their view that Pentecostalism was not hostile to the Jaycoxs or the CMA. They merely maintain that the CMA "doesn't believe in certain things" (people usually mention tongues or other miracles at this point). Indeed, most locals I spoke to (including some Pentecostal pastors) stated that the Pentecostal missionaries arrived in the area *before* the CMA. These contentions are not supported by any archival data; thus I maintain that the Alliance interlude was crucial to creating the conditions that allowed for the expansion of Pentecostalism in Trout and Peerless. A supporting comparative example can be seen in the existence of an Evangelical mission at Little Buffalo preceding long-term expansion of Pentecostalism in Little Buffalo and Cadotte Lake.

Alessandro Portelli provides a useful example, using oral histories of the Italian working class, of how personal "formal organization of memory" (1991:20) may obscure recollection of the objective order and relation of events, even while providing insights into the personal meaning of events. For Portelli, this reflects dissonance in the cultural definitions of an "event" (1991:25). That is, for many local people, the arrivals of Evangelical and Pentecostal missionaries were seen as part of the same event, not two different events. That different missionary groups had always seemed somewhat indistinct to many Cree, and that the Evangelicals unwittingly collaborated with Pentecostals (so contributing to their own decline), did not make the phases of missionization appear any more distinct to most local people. Nevertheless, the Evangelical and Pentecostal missions were, for the most part, separately organized and chronologically distinct, as I have shown. Perhaps this forgetfulness is but one part of a wider loss of memory in the community concerning the period surrounding settlement in permanent communities, and conversions to Evangelicalism and Pentecostalism.

Certainly, both the CMA and the Pentecostals offered a livelier ritual than the Catholics (Waugh 1996:155, note 55). The emphasis on ritualized healing, put forward by the CMA and especially the Pentecostals, also touched a chord with the Cree. Even with Vandersteene's Cree knowledge and ritual innovation, the defections, which had begun to the CMA, continued to the Pentecostals. By early 1967, multiple groups of Pentecostal missionaries reached Trout. Cree Pentecostals from Wabasca (one originally from Peerless), as well as non-Native Pentecostals missionaries, were successful in making a lot of noise and seeming to convert virtually everyone. This missionary activity emboldened two local converts to host their own prayer meeting, which nearly all of Trout attended (Vandersteene. Letter to Mgr. Routhier, Jan. 16, 1967). In spite of this, Vandersteene felt some hope as he prepared a number of new communicants for confirmation.

By spring, matters were more urgent, as Pentecostalism had swept Chipewyan Lake, with only one extended family there remaining Catholic (Vandersteene. Letter to Routhier. April 4, 1967). The means employed by the Pentecostal missionaries was to arrive in a community with fanfare and to stay several days meeting in any available structure. As well as large meetings, they also organized bible circles and individual discussions. Still, Vandersteene felt optimistic as he pointed to some reconversions to Catholicism, demonstrating early on that Pentecostal conversion is not always a one-way journey.

For his part, reviewing the news from Vandersteene and from other priests encountering similar difficulties, Mgr. Routhier appeared less optimistic:

> 'I would never have imagined that the Pentecostals would have made such a ravage among these primitives in relatively little time. It's true that our missionaries' visits have been rare and relatively brief. These little protestant sects are dogged fanatics who have no real sense of ecumenicism…
>
> These little protestant sects penetrate throughout our dispersed Indians and we are unable to counteract their influence among the Indians who have little instruction and who have never seen much difference between the Catholic Church and other churches' (Routhier. Letter to Vandersteene. April 10, 1967).
> –Translated by Clint Westman and Gabriel Asselin

While Routhier's call for greater ecumenicism could also be made against his own organization, overall his concerns resemble those expressed earlier in the chapter, about Indians not understanding and being essentially non-doctrinal.

For their part, it is clear that most of the Evangelical and Pentecostal missionaries bore no great love for the Catholics. In 1966, one H.J. Enns (identifying himself as an Evangelical missionary in spite of his Mennonite name), of Little Buffalo, wrote a letter challenging the Catholic missionaries in the region: "If any person or organization seeks to mediate between man and God he or it is not a mediator but a separating agency" (April 6, 1966. Little Buffalo file. AGM). Therefore, Enns explained, he could not appear to be friendly with the Catholics, in spite of the demands of Christian charity, *lest the Indians would not be able to tell the difference between Protestant and Catholic.* Here we see the particularly Protestant concern for avoiding fetishization of church, ritual, and organization (*cf.* Jacobs 1996, Keane 2007), on the one hand, together with the commonplace missionaries' reluctance to believe that the Indians could understand doctrinal difference, on the other hand.

By 1968, the troubles were keeping Vandersteene too busy to write. Later that year, Vandersteene left Fr. Paul Hernou (together with a small group of nuns) in charge of the mission at Trout. Hernou struggled with Cree initially and was nervous about filling Vandersteene's shoes. In 1969, the situation with the Pentecostals was sufficiently unstable that Hernou received permission to delay his first annual report by a year. So it would appear that Trout was increasingly swept with Pentecostal missionaries during the last third of the 1960s. Early independent missionaries who preached in Trout and Peerless during the 1960s included Paul Gladue (Little Buffalo), Joe Cardinal (Wabasca), Don Yellowknee (Wabasca), George Yellowknee (Wabasca), Alphonse Auger (unknown provenance), and Clarence Dealy (a non-Native who came to Trout via Wabasca).[81]

Also during this period, Trout Lake community members began to request lay teachers, rather than the teaching sisters, another sign of the declining control of the RCC in Trout Lake itself. Although nearly the entire population was baptized Catholic, Hernou considered many of them to be non-practicing. Nevertheless, he maintained a fairly high number of new communicants by adapting strategies from the Pentecostals, including holding mass in homes. Also, he noted, people were beginning to realize that the Eucharist was the greatest point of difference between the Catholics and Pentecostals (no mention of the Alliance). During this period, the RCC continued to administer sacraments to most comers (SHGSR. Trout Lake file), perhaps at its highest rate since arriving in Trout. Many current leading figures in the Pentecostal movement were baptized or married as Catholics during this period.[82]

---

[81] These names were solicited from a few knowledgeable individuals in Trout and Peerless.

Consolidation of Pentecostalism?

Oral history and limited archival data suggest that the 1970s saw continuing increases in the number of Pentecostal adherents. Both Catholics and non-Catholics continued to be drawn to the Pentecostal message, as well as the network's increased organizational durability and sophistication. To some extent, this was facilitated by the greater ease of individuals and families moving between communities, following improved road access in the early 1970s, which allowed the message to spread faster. The ability of community members or their kin (such as John P. Cardinal and Louis Auger, to name two early examples) to act as indigenous missionaries continued as a significant boost to Pentecostal prospects in the region (*cf.* Preston 1975a:121-3).

By the early 1970s, signs of institutionalization and continuity of leadership could be seen in local Pentecostal life. During this phase, local pastors such as Joe Okemow set up freestanding churches (resembling in many respects the bourgeois expectation of a church) that have, generally speaking, endured. Later, Joe took formal training from an outside pastor (in Joe's case, the Saskatchewan Aboriginal Evangelist Clark Stevenson[83]), returning to their communities to build their church further. A parallel process can be seen in Trout Lake, in the formal affiliation of Faith in God's Temple church (founded in the early 1970s) to the provincewide Aboriginal ministry, JC

---

[82] Similarly, the limited available information on sacraments suggests that many further Catholic marriages and infant baptisms occurred in the 1980s (including as subjects several families and individuals now heavily involved in Pentecostalism), in spite of the apparent decline in church membership during this period (SHGSR. Trout Lake file). This suggests a continuing emphasis on sacraments as a key advantage of the RCC.

[83] Stevenson was "saved from a life of alcohol" by Rev. Max Solbrekken in the early 1970s. (Max Solbrekken World Missions. http://www.mswm.org/miracles.allanosoupe.htm. Accessed February 11, 2008.)

Ministries, led by Métis evangelist, politician and leader, Jeannette Calahasen. Prior to their loose affiliation with outside preachers, however, both of these churches were constructed mainly by volunteer labour, the former with some funding support from government and industry (Woodward 1990). Both in their inception and their longevity, these churches mark the phase (occurring in the late sixties through early seventies) during which Pentecostalism coalesced from a nascent network into an established (at least in local terms) movement.

Although I am not proposing a deterministic linkage between religion and economics, it is clear that the religious upheavals of the 1960s must be seen in the context of socio-economic changes in the region. Apart from the culture shock of moving into sedentary communities (which nevertheless had poor to non-existent services, wage economies, and access), there is archival evidence of declining health and diet standards, poor accommodation, heavy reliance on relief, and increased availability of alcohol.[84]

Beginning as early as the 1930s, the isolated communities' inhabitants faced poor health: there were many outbreaks of flu, diarrhea, TB, etc. Also, during this period people began to receive formal medical care, in some cases being transferred to Edmonton for long- or short-term attention. This contributed to a growing number of people in the region who had been institutionalized outside the immediate region (through the medical or educational systems, or both) and were thus exposed to facets of white society in depth. Similarly, the rapid increase in resource development in the broader region (around Wabasca, Little Buffalo and Loon lakes, although not in the immediate vicinity of Trout and Peerless) ensured that a growing number of people were exposed to wage labour or environmental damage. These hunters may have perceived their traditional livelihoods to be threatened or perhaps less desirable; such broader awareness of the world may have resulted in dissatisfaction with life in the communities. Some people reportedly left Trout during this period so as not to have to accept relief; the district's first recorded suicide was during the mid-1960s. The beginnings of an industrial economy in the region since the 1950s (including oil exploration, forestry, road building, and a commercial fishery), as well as attendant social changes, likely played a role in promoting insecurity in the region, and thus may have promoted the Evangelical/Pentecostal option at this time.

---

[84] Multiple consultants suggested that nearly all men drank in the 1960s. Mission records indicate the problem was much rarer among women.

The 1960s was a time of increasing radicalism among Aboriginal people generally, and this had some impact locally as well. In the late 1960s, the demolition of the community at Marten River, and the inhabitants' subsequent forced relocation to Cadotte Lake (Goddard 1991:32-41), was a significant factor in contributing to the increase of political activism in the remaining isolated communities (Personal communication: David Starr 2005). A number of local individuals such as David Starr and William Beaver (both of whom had been educated in Wabasca; Beaver later became chief of BCN and an important Pentecostal leader) were salient in these efforts, working through community associations and with both the Indian Association of Alberta and the Metis Association of Alberta (Glenbow Museum Archives: Trout Lake file.) to advance local concerns, including treaty and Métis rights. So successful were these efforts that Trout Lake was featured on the cover of the *Edmonton Journal* in 1966, in an article emphasizing isolation, illness, high cost of food, and poor standards of living.

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, however, the status of land and governance rights in the communities remained unclear, as governments refused to negotiate and the provincial government used retroactive legislative changes to undermine a caveat filed by local leaders claiming land rights. This political cauldron certainly contributed to social unease.

To conclude this chapter, I will offer a perhaps surprising vision of a possible future: one in which Pentecostalism plays a steadily decreasing role. Although church leaders were understandably reluctant to discuss this, multiple data sources point to a pronounced tendency for several individuals to fall away from these churches after an initial period of intense involvement. On a societal level it appears that this trend moves in a wavelike fashion, so that many people will join and fall away from churches around the same time. Such a shift may be occurring now.

During and immediately after my fieldwork, Pentecostal churches (or, more accurately, the would-be principals of congregations) in communities such as Peerless Lake and Little Buffalo Lake (formerly the homes of active Evangelical missionaries) struggled to keep their doors open. Moreover, many people my age and younger, whose parents are Christian, claimed to me that they had no religion (*cf.* Canada 2001). Pastors spoke of a decline in church attendance over the past decade, but did not discuss the reasons for this. Indeed, it appears that (in Peerless Lake at any rate) current church attendance is well below that of the 1990s, when many if not most families and individuals were heavily involved (Woodward 1990). Multiple consultants suggested that nearly everyone in Peerless Lake was attending church at this time, with Woodward quoting a source that only 10 people in Peerless Lake were not involved in a church around 1990. On at least one occasion during that year, "about 130 people" reportedly attended Faith Centre in Peerless Lake (Woodward 1990). This figure likely would have represented about 1/3 of the settlement's population at that time.

From 2005 to 2008, I never saw anything approaching the number cited by Woodward at any religious service, except for funerals. Thus I surmise that numerous individuals and families who were formerly heavily involved have left the church or diminished their involvement to a large extent. I hypothesize that some of these "backslidings" may be the result of prominent, public, deliverance or healing attempts that failed, or of millenarian or other prophesies that rang false. Any such incident could have caused, as Ruth Jaycox put it, the Pentecostal "bubble" to "burst."

The peak of Pentecostalism locally, then (at least in terms of church membership and attendance), may have occurred very early in its mission: perhaps in the late sixties or early seventies. Another spike in adherence occurred following the tragic deaths of 1986, during which time local leaders consciously relaxed moral stringency and evangelized both more widely and more sensitively in dealing with drugs and alcohol (Woodward 1990). This short-lived attempt to reach out to people in need, rather than expecting them to give up drinking (to say nothing of smoking) all at once, was successful for a time after 1986, but is no longer so evident. Note that both of these proposed periods of success for Pentecostalism involved socio-economic crises that resulted in the region's appearing on the front pages of major newspapers, suggesting that Pentecostal conversion may be a response to stress for many individuals.

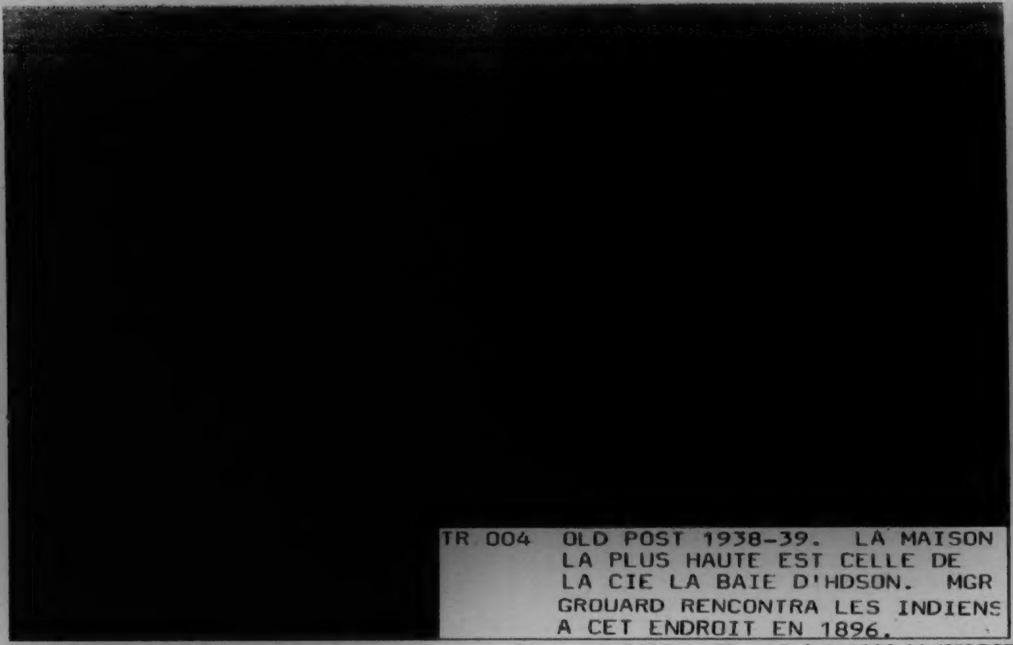
The decline in worshippers relates to the common tendency among new adherents of Pentecostalism (as church leader John A. Cardinal alluded to specifically) to backslide or fall away after an initial period of strong involvement. It is unclear whether Trout Lake is facing a similar decline, to the same extent as Peerless. Certainly however, church attendance levels in Trout Lake during my fieldwork do not suggest that the majority of the population are regular church attenders, possibly indicating a pronounced decline since 2001. *If* Pentecostalism was a response to a crisis, will it have longevity with or without the crisis' continuance? Could Trout and Peerless be said to be moving *out* of a crisis, with the impending land claim settlement?

Looking at the past, one sees the Catholics struggling to maintain dominance over their Protestant competitors without realizing the full implications of the struggle, the rules (and antagonists) of which had changed. One can also sympathize with the Jaycoxs, that the Pentecostals came in only after the CMA had done a lot of work to prepare people for a slightly more subtle Evangelical message; however in historical terms the CMA appears to function largely as an incubator for proto-Pentecostal leaders and ideas. The Jaycoxs themselves suggested that the more emotional style of Pentecostal worship is a major factor here, including a role for music and dancing, which resembles Cree ceremonies. While this may be the case, it is equally important to look at the role that CMA doctrine played in preparing people for the Pentecostal message.

In mainstream North American society, as well as in Aboriginal missions, established Evangelical churches such as the CMA have been a major recruitment pool for Pentecostal missionaries for over a century. Globally there are many examples of similar situations (*e.g.,* Birdwell-Pheasant 1980:105-107), in which relatively stable Catholic colonial societies were missionized by Evangelical, Nonconformist, or alternative churches. This initial wave of conversions fragmented the community and modernized certain aspects of the religious discourse, which opened the door for Pentecostal missionaries to overwhelm both the Catholic mission, as well as the evangelistic interlopers. A comparable situation appears to exist in the isolated communities during the postwar period, as I have shown here. Thus, a critical historical analysis, open to controlled comparisons both within and outside the region, provides many tools for understanding the growth of Pentecostalism, and its relations with other denominations and prior spiritual traditions.

TR 009 COMMERCE DES FOURRURES AU
MAGASIN DE LA BAIE D'HUDSON

Figure 16: Trout Lake, Years Ago (SHGSR)



TR 004 OLD POST 1938-39. LA MAISON LA PLUS HAUTE EST CELLE DE LA CIE LA BAIE D'HDSON. MGR GROUARD RENCONTRA LES INDIENS A CET ENDROIT EN 1896.

Figure 17: Old Post (Trout Lake), 1938-39 (SHGSR)

Chapter Four: Traditional Cree spirituality in today's communities[85]

In order to understand the local articulation of Christianity, some historical and ethnographic exploration of the prior religious tradition is required. As a new religion in northern Alberta, Christianity (both Catholic and Protestant) is inevitably received, interpreted, and understood in terms of the prior religion and the overall worldview in which it is embedded (Laugrand 2002). Additionally, traditional or intertribal Indian practices are now being promoted by a wide range of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal actors, including state actors. Thus, to fully contextualize my study of the Pentecostal mission field at Trout Lake, it is necessary both to understand traditional Cree religious practices as they have existed in the study region, and to attend to new or neo-traditional manifestations of Cree religious culture in today's communities.

Many people at Trout and Peerless, aged under forty, explained to me that they had never learned traditional religion as their parents had already converted to Evangelical or Pentecostal Christianity. Previously, for many people, traditional ceremonies may have been losing their relevance after several decades of Catholic and Anglican missionary visits. "Our culture was kind of dying down," even before the arrival of evangelists, opined one person. Others (including elders) concurred, stating that traditional ceremonies had ceased "kayâs" ('long ago'): "long before" the arrival of Pentecostals. Although data indicate that public ceremonies continued into the mid-sixties around Trout Lake, available evidence suggests that a gradual decline in their frequency and attendance had by then been underway for some time.

---

[85] I would like to acknowledge the contribution of multiple collaborators in helping me write this chapter, particularly Joseph Cardinal, who read a draft and provided comments.

In spite of decreased ceremonial activity during the post-war period, many contemporary elders closely associated with the rise of the Pentecostal movement are the children or peers of the last generation of traditional ceremonialists of the district. These contemporary elders participated in tradition prior to (and, in some cases, since) their conversions. As such, the continued power of traditional belief is widely acknowledged by local people, with Christianity often understood mainly in opposition to traditional religion. Thus, converts are supposed to denigrate traditional religion, which many local people refer to as "witchcraft." I am using this term herein only to represent their discourse accurately.

Even those community members with a very limited knowledge of Cree spirituality see it as an important symbolic component in a network of relations and oppositions, which gives Pentecostalism its local resonance. Further, many people nominally involved in Pentecostalism also continue to participate in traditional spiritual or medicinal activities. Therefore, some consideration of traditional forms and values (and their subsequent diabolicization by Christians) is vital to understanding the affective spiritual power felt by most Cree adherents of Pentecostalism. One local woman claimed that most community members "don't understand anything" about traditional ceremonies, due to the success and long tenure of evangelists in the community. However, my research suggests that Cree precepts and practices continue to be important in local religion, popular ontology, and cultural ecology.

Although the majority of local residents are not regular participants in traditional ceremonies, there is wide awareness of stories, observances, taboos, relations, and practices, which constitute a significant base of popular religious knowledge. Also, many learned elders still retain a vast and sophisticated knowledge of traditional religious principles, both as these relate to ceremonial observance and to daily living (such as traditional land use). Some ceremonialists (outside Trout and Peerless) were informative and supportive consultants. In this chapter I attempt to provide an account of the principles and practices that have animated spiritual life in the study region, and which (as much due to missionary attacks as to local loyalties) continue to shape Christianity in the likeness (or reflection) of pre-existing Cree traditions.

The religion that is not a religion

The study of religion in the Cree context is complicated by the lack of satisfactory terminology in English for the object of study. Many Cree object to the use of the word "religion" to describe Cree belief and practice. As Cree Teacher Hilda Cardinal stated:

> They don't really call it Religion. It was just their way of life. They didn't make it up, it was just passed down from generation to generation. Religion has a name and it's a system. It's something you believe in.

This signifies the dichotomy between belief in doctrine (the hallmark of missionary religions) and observance of practical relations (the hallmark of local spirituality). As I have learned, "studied" people are themselves capable of understanding the analytical difference between belief and practice, between religion and culture.

Upon my inquiry, Hilda stated that the best translation for the traditional Cree belief system may be *nehiyawihtwâwin* ('Cree-mindedness' [my translation]), which connotes "the Cree way of life" (Wolfart and Ahenekew 1998:115). The Cree way of life includes spiritual beliefs and practices. The root word, *nehiyaw* (Cree Indian person) suggests an embodiment (*-iyaw*) in place through the four (*newo*) directions and seasons, linking Creeness closely to the land and to spirituality (Marjorie Memnook: Personal Communication. April 11, 2008). Through its (modified) use of a particle, *ihta*, the larger word also implies mindfulness: "It's something in your brain," as Hilda said of Creeness. In its broadest sense, this word (*nehiyawihtwâwin*) has become an object of study for me: what is the Cree way of life in the context of missionary modernity?

Prior to my meeting Hilda, Peerless Lake elder Louie J. Cardinal had already told me (translated by Andrew Orr): "We didn't really have any religion in the past." Louie then began to outline details of a system of spiritual and exchange relations between humans and other persons including plants, animals, spirits, and ancestors. Mastering these relationships and their attendant body of knowledge is a state of mind, practically requiring that one "be born Native" (as Andrew Orr said), since traditional knowledge is the product of a lifetime of practice and discourse. This tends to support Hilda Cardinal's assertion that living the Cree way of life is a question of identity, mindfulness, and relatedness. Contemporary anthropological research demonstrates that the concept of "religion," as a separate sphere of activity, is itself a hallmark of modernity (Cannell 2006:27), suggesting that the Cree approach to spirituality (embedded in cognition, social relations, and daily life) as "not a religion" is not so anomalous as it first appeared to me.

While insisting that Cree religious terminology and practice do fall within the western scholarly definitions of Religion, Earle Waugh affirms Louie's and Hilda's basic point, stating:

> Our word religion is not to be found in the Cree lexicon, and the closest word we find to it is specific to one religion, apparently suggesting that those words arose when the Cree first encountered Christians. Indeed, a wide variety of Cree terms would be needed to encompass what the History of Religions has denoted as

> "religion," including some that are knowingly related to witchcraft and spirit manipulation (2001:487).

Where does this leave the analyst respecting terminology?

Michael McNally (2000:11) suggests that Algonquian religions would be better considered as "lifeways," and that the question of what constitutes *not a religion* is "one of the key presenting problems of inquiry into Native American religious traditions" (2000:12). Webb Keane (2007) also reflects on the difficulties of studying conversions among people who maintain that they had no religion prior to Christianity. Robert Brightman (2002) solves the problem by using the word "religion," to describe the object of study in a comparative sense. For her part, Regna Darnell suggests that the Cree symbolic system resembles a "combination of religion/philosophy/history/ epistemology for which English has no word" (Darnell 1991:99). Darnell's formulation suggests that a phenomenological, practical, grounded, or experience-near approach to understanding Cree tradition is better founded than are speculative inquiries into belief. Albertan Indigenous scholars such as Cora Weber-Pillwax (2003:29) and Leona Makokis (2001:9), whose work I draw on in this chapter, also use phenomenological or grounded theory approaches in their research on Cree spirituality.

Louie and Andrew explained to me how the role of personal experience on the land in creating knowledge is closely related to spiritual learning and power (*cf.* Darnell 1991, Goulet 1998, Ridington 1988, Tanner 1979). Knowledge is embedded in a life history of practice and of learning relationships with others, including elders and non-human persons. Louie's life is informed by place and seasonality: for him, looking out at Peerless Lake calls to mind the cycle of the fishery and his people's skill and knowledge in using this resource, including the use of handmade nets and canoes well into the 20th century. Walking on the land, he sees roots that he "respects" as the source of spiritual and medicinal power. Aged over 70, Louie still knows and travels old trails, which extend through the bush for hundreds of kilometers linking past dwelling places.

On a similar note, Peerless Lake elder Ida Houle spoke to me about her pastime of walking the lakeshore, collecting eagle feathers and medicinal plants. Her ongoing use of these traditional resources is part of a system of personal knowledge drawn from an experience of life on the land. Ida's lived experience has given her subjective knowledge of the locations of births, deaths, and sickness during travel on the land. This suggests a phenomenological totality of experiencing places, in which religious elements would be difficult to analytically strip away from secular ones.

Plains Cree ceremonialist Ken Roan explained to me how the law of the Creator is there for all to see. It is written in the Creator's language, he said, with medicinal plants, ritual fire, and sacred stones (used as pipes or altars) attesting to its power. Thus, knowing the land and "respecting" its plants, animals, and spirits make up integral parts of traditional Cree practice. This network of relations is not limited to traditionalists: I am aware of an elderly lady who, while a Pentecostal, continues to "respect" plants. As I wrote in Chapter One, this type of respect (*manâcihtâ*) [*cf.* Wolfart and Ahenekew 1998:78] for traditional resources continues to animate relations between foragers and their land today. It is also a word used by Pentecostals and practitioners of other traditions, in their religious discourse, to describe their spiritual relationship with God. Understanding Cree words like *manâcihtâ* (and other words for religious experiences) as used across multiple Christian and non-Christian traditions through time is more important in this study than arbitrarily assigning words such as Religion to Cree ideas.

According to Wolfart and Ahenekew (1998:359), the word "religion" could be translated as *ayamihâwin* (which literally means 'praying;' the word is also related etymologically to the Cree word for reading). This referred originally to Christian rites (Waugh 2001:486), although it has been back-translated by many as *nehiyaw ayamihâwin*, to gloss 'Cree Religion.' The Cree words for church, cross, Sunday, priest, and nun all use the root *ayamihâ*, implying a formal association with a literary religion.

By contrast, in traditional Cree religious discourse, to pray is translated as *kâkesimo*. According to Cree Instructor Marjorie Memnook, *kâkesimo* implies an overall sense of respect and humbleness before creation. However, while the two types of prayer are different, the object of veneration may be the same. As Marjorie stated, she is comfortable in a revival, a Catholic church, or a traditional ceremony. She and many others see the Christian God and the Cree Creator as essentially the same manifestation of *manito* (spirit or god [Wolfart and Ahenekew 1998:79]). Many consultants, both Pentecostals (including leaders) and non-Pentecostals, stated their belief that the Cree of the past and present-day Pentecostals were praying to the same God in a different way. Different religious networks even use many of the same names for God(s). Even so, their distinct practices and discourses cause them to dispute with one another.

"No one knows the real name or word for Manito"

Concepts of Christian divinity and Cree spirit are very much wrapped up with one another for many community members. Prior to the arrival of missionaries, Cree believed in the existence of numerous spirits, including a spirit of a higher order: a "supreme being," more remote from human affairs. However, it was only later that this entity came to be "incorporated into the Christian deity and named Kitci Manitu" (Long *et al* 2006:451). Elements of this incorporation process can be seen in divergent religious traditions today.

Through a discursive process, aspects of divinity are incorporated across traditions. Birgit Meyer notes that, in Ghana, "Christian Ewe discourse contains many "heathen" terms which also account for the peculiarity of local Christian interpretations" (1999:xviii). This resembles the situation among the Cree and opens the door to considering the impact of these "heathen" terms on Christian practice and ideology. Key signifiers, which must be translated, include names of God(s) and words for religious states. These translations are the sites of cultural contests.

In many cases I documented in my fieldwork, Cree words for such states and entities are used across religious traditions (traditional, Catholic, Pentecostal), for example:

kâtepeyiciket: 'Master of Life; owner; Creator; Lord; Yahweh' (my translation)

manito: 'power; spirit; endowed entity, God; Spirit; Elohim' (my translation)

While these names may be supposed to refer to the same entity (God, in Christian terms), some glosses are less familiar or have a different feeling in different speech communities. A discussion of a translation problem I encountered, in December, 2007, may serve to frame the terms of this internal dispute.

Ray G. Thunderchild, a Plains Cree translator with whom I am working (who is not from northern Alberta), used relatively free variation of lexical terms for divinities in translating a short prayer uttered by Joe Trindle, of Trout Lake. Ray's translation is poetic and holds the interest of those reading in English. Ray's translation also responded well to the syntactic structure of the original, including many nominalizations of action-oriented concepts (such as *kâtepeyiciket*) and verbalizations that link objects in action. For example, see the first line of Joe's prayer. The text is right justified to emphasize parallels in the key term under examination, the last clause of the sentence, which is in {brackets} for emphasis:[86]

Cree: Hâw nôhtâwînân kihci mîna kinanâskomitinân {manito kâtipeyihcikeyan}
Ray's translation: Our Father we honor and respect you {Creator of all things}
My partial retranslation: {Lord God}

I present this prayer in its entirety in Chapter Six and wish to address only a few salient points about the names of God(s) here.

The potential problem I saw in Ray's preliminary translation of the relevant clause, {Creator of all things}, is its use of the word "Creator." The concept of the Creator is widely accepted within contemporary Aboriginal societies, resembles both biblical and modern mainstream church usages, and reflects some of the potential meanings of *kâtipeyihcikeyan* ('you who are the owner': my modification from a translation of *kâtepeyiciket* by Marjorie Memnook); however, its use is still problematic in the context of Trout Lake Pentecostals. I cannot recall hearing any Cree Pentecostals mentioning this "Creator" concept, since most would associate it with Cree tradition and witchcraft. When I raised these potential difficulties with Ray, he simply stated, "But that's what Creator means in my language." On the other hand, Peter Thunder had stated that *kâtepeyiciket* means 'Lord' among local Pentecostals. This shows the potential for variance between speech communities, across geographic and ideological boundaries. With Ray's approval, I am presenting some retranslated lexemes in accordance with local tradition, and so present these revised translations as joint works by Thunderchild and myself. In this particular case, I chose to translate {manito kâtipeyihcikeyan} as

---

[86] Transcribed by Dorothy Thunder.

{Lord God}. This translation more closely resembles local discourse and intent, I feel, while still closely resembling elements of the meanings of the constituent words.

Centuries of contact with Euro-Canadian society have inevitably changed and broadened the way words and concepts (particularly those relating to religion) have been understood, since the pre-contact period. Moreover, even the fullest knowledge of a spiritual system can only be partial. As an elder remarked:

> Namoya awiyak kiskeyitam tansi esi sikâsiyit manito-a.
> 'No one knows the real name or word for manito' (quoted in Waugh 2001:473).

The existence of some debate among Cree Christians about the appropriate translation of names for God is also attested to by Mrs. Emma Minde, a late Roman Catholic elder from Hobbema. As Mrs. Minde told Freda Ahenekew, recalling a conversation she had had with another elder:

> I have even heard you call God the 'Father of All' (mâmaw-ôhtâwîmâw) – at one time I had been confused as to who is this 'Father of All.' Then finally one woman told me, she came from [Onion Lake] over there and she had come to visit me here, an elderly woman, "Who is that one," I said to her, "Father of All?" I said to her; "that is the Merciful God (kise-manitow), that is what I call him," she said to me. Now, with that I understand you when we – when you say 'Father of All.' But as for me, I prefer to hear us say 'Merciful God' when we talk about God (kise-manitow) [Minde 1997:14-17).

Mrs. Minde went on to suggest that the words used to invoke the divine can matter a great deal in shaping the hearers' responses and attitudes towards the divine.

Waugh asserts that Cree usage of sacred terms is discursive, changing, and based in life experiences and "gifts." Lexical choice may reflect one's knowledge of Christian, traditional, and/or other spiritual worlds:

> The way elements of the Cree religious system are understood - like *manito* or shaman or faith - will all depend upon experiences of a "gift"-specified kind, and their acceptance by a culture. This makes it very difficult to develop either a publically acknowledged religious history, or a publicly-approved "science of

> religion," despite the arguments of recent scholarship. The quandary that it leaves for one trained in the History of Religions is obvious (2001:489-90).

Waugh's argument is that religion is not a homogenous object that can be studied scientifically, but a range of experiential phenomena that must be interpreted. As such, names for the divine with a demonstrably pre-missionary origin (such as *kâtepeyiciket* and *manito*, both of which are referred to by David Thompson prior to the arrival of missionaries among the Cree) continue to have polysemic referential value, potentially meaning different things to different people at the same time or to the same person at different times. This is relevant to translation, as Marjorie Memnook stated that correct translation of religious material depends on "what kind of person" the translator is, that is, on knowledge gained through spiritual encounters.

The idea that words are polysemic (and thus cannot be fully translated or explained) is similar to foundational insights within linguistic anthropology:

> Not only may (a word's) feeling tone change from one age to another (this, of course, is true of its conceptual content as well), but it varies remarkably from individual to individual according to the personal associations of each, varies, indeed, from time to time in a single individual's consciousness as his experiences mold him and his moods change...
>
> The feeling tones of words are of no use, strictly speaking, to science; the philosopher, if he desires to arrive at truth rather than to merely persuade, finds them his most insidious enemies. But man is rarely engaged in pure science, in solid thinking. Generally his mental activities are bathed in a warm current of feeling and he seizes upon the feeling tones of words as gentle aids to the desired excitation (Sapir 1921:40-41).

Here one is in the realm where linguistics meets phenomenology and psychology.

How are words apprehended, understood, or felt? The study of such questions necessitates attention to the relationship of language with embodied states (Csordas 1994), emotions (Bousquet 2007b), and "somatic modes of attention" (Mossière 2007).

All these approaches suggest a deeply individualized sense of experience and understanding, which may not be open to linguistic inquiry. Such “poetic indeterminacy” (Friedrich 1986), inherent in language, provides an entry point to understand the use by Cree people of Christian words and concepts (see also Bourdieu 1982:17).

According to Meyer, “Each Ewe term is a kind of linguistic parallax [quoting Leinhardt]... a term viewed from both the non-Christian and the Christian point of observation” (1999:81; *cf.* Friedrich 1986). Complicating the discussion further is the idea that conversion entails translating not only concepts of divinity but also of evil. Indeed, for many Pentecostals worldwide, “translating the Devil” (Meyer 1999; quoting book title) may well be the most affective transformation involved in religious conversion. Meyer notes that Pentecostalism’s success came from taking indigenous people’s fear of spirits seriously, creating a space where Pentecostals are able to enact forbidden aspects of themselves (*ibid*:211; see also Robbins 2004a:127, DeBernardi 1999).

The orientations of Louie, Ida, and others make it clear that nature, and relations with nature, are cornerstones of spiritual practice and personal identity in Cree tradition. This is consistent with Nadia Ferrara’s description (quoting Arlene Stairs) of Cree identity as being “eco-centric”, with “eco-” encompassing human, animal/vegetable, and environmental elements in a “composite self” (Ferrara 2004:41, *cf.* Hallowell 1955). In the model of the composite Cree self, other entities are encountered by and within the self and may be recognized through different emotions, discourses, and practices. While Pentecostals believe that interacting with some of these other (demonic?) selves caused fear and disintegration, there is much evidence to suggest that fear was/is not the main emotion felt by Cree interacting with spirits.

David Starr commented on the distinct emotions cultivated by each tradition to apprehend the divine, contrasting the fear (of death and hell) in the Christian tradition with the respect and holism of the Cree:

> DS It was the *fear* they used to try and push that, to try and change Native people. And it was *never* that way with the Native… Native belief in the Great Spirit. And our recognition, because we live with the Great Spirit, out on the land.
>
> CW You lived your religion, that type of thing?
>
> DS We lived it, and we were happy, anything that we were able to get to survive in food, there's always a thanksgiving, for what you get, especially if you've got a family, and you know your family's eating and they've got a roof over their heads and whatnot. There's always a thanksgiving, if that's the word.
>
> CW How did they do that thanksgiving?
>
> DS It was a thanksgiving, like you have this Thanksgiving Day now. It was in you. Everything you did, sometime during the day, you just stop and say, '*nâskomitin* ('thank you'), [hmm] just like that. Giving you thanks for these and we're moving around, I can do it, and thanks for giving me something to eat and to use, family: that's it. It was always right there. It wasn't a: 'Just stop and say it's Sunday! Open a book, sit down and read a book!' nothing.
>
> We never *close* the Book, if there is a Book. As there is, but I mean, we actually lived it. And that was OK, you want to say Religion and I don't think it's Religion. It was just a belief, a real strong belief and that was generally what was run through the Native understanding of the afterlife, of the after-there, the Great Spirit, and the…
>
> CW So they believed in the afterlife too? Like you go with the Great Spirit?
>
> DS Oh ya!

Many Pentecostals now characterize traditional spirituality as a religion based on fear, whereas David associated fear with Christianity itself.

David's discussion of the Cree way of being spiritual in the world is contrasted with the Christian emphasis on "the Book." In line with this, Fr. Roger Vandersteene describes witnessing "Old Edward," of Peerless Lake, pray in the woods:

> He gets up in the morning and he goes down to the lake shore, and he sings, "Ah, Ma-a-ni-tou." And then he goes on his way. Sometimes I've been with him all day, and he will suddenly start to sing, "Ah, Ma-a-ni-tou" over and over again. He doesn't need a lot of words like we do (quoted in Waugh 1996:136).

Musical modes and formal aspects of discourse play an important role in creating the mood for such a prayer, recognizing co-present spiritual entities in nature. Old Edward's approach also brings to mind Starr's and Memnook's comments on humbleness and thankfulness in prayer (*cf.* Frank McIntyre, quoted in Cardinal and Hildebrandt 2000:12). Such an approach to spirituality is more concerned with experiencing and expressing relations with powerful others, than in a set of doctrines and beliefs. I assert that this approach to life continues to manifest itself within the experiences of many Aboriginal people today.

Experiencing places spiritually

Figure 18: Bush/Community

Members of the current generation of elders recall life histories intimately connected with personal experience of movement over the land. This includes knowledge of cabins, gravesites, and other special places, many of which are named. Such spaces are set in personal experience, which changes one's emotional orientation to a place. As the Cadotte Lake elder, John Edward Laboucan, said about his trapline:

> Sometimes I call it (*i.e.,* my trapline) my home instead of where I am today, and same with some of my family, once we go there to stay, sometimes we don't feel

> like coming back. Because we had made a living from the wilderness from the start (quoted in Laboucan 1995a:50).

Laboucan's observations about his true home tend to uphold Adrian Tanner's (1979:203) observation of a Maussian framework of social bifurcation, in which people encounter different social structures and personal moods, between the community and the bush, living with these structures in a manner similar to the changing of the seasons.

Members of a younger generation, who grew up partly on the land (those aged 55-65 during my major fieldwork), also have a strong attachment to bush places as sites of lived experience. William Auger described and named seven generations of ancestors to have lived in the same area: this is consistent with land claims research conducted in the 1970s, which stated that many elders could trace their genealogy back to individuals born in the immediate vicinity during the early 1800s (Cree People 1985). The physical manifestations of this history are grave and cabin sites. William remembered the seasonal log cabin, tent, and wigwam communities that were ubiquitous in the area from the 1890s until his youth during the fifties. As he stated about a mood he felt while recently calling moose at Equisetem Lake (where his ancestors had camped) with kin:

> I got kind of lonely, thinking about all the people who had lived there, that I had known. I saw the lake when I was just a boy and people lived there then. Now they're all gone. We were so.. *close*. I miss the old people, I remember that place.

Thus, it is key to understand the bush as not just a space but as a complex of polysemic referents connoting a way of life: social connections, physical sensations, and spiritual/emotional ties. The role of spirituality or even of Christianity in this matrix is complex, as many people learned the rudiments of both Christianity and Cree spirituality in cabins or tents on the land, often learning both traditions from the same elders.

Younger people, who did not grow up in such a traditional manner, also feel a close attachment to the bush. Most families have access to one or more cabins and other hardware required for bush subsistence. Today even many Cree people who do not consciously practice traditional spirituality still feel a deep bond of a spiritual nature with the bush, its stories, and its resources.

Many Pentecostals continue to experience attachment to the bush as a spiritual phenomenon, in spite of their supposedly rejecting the bush-based ontology Cree spirituality is based upon. As Peter Thunder stated, while staying overnight at a cabin in the bush on a trapping trip: "It's just a feeling: the heat of the fire, the freedom, the quiet. It's just a feeling: it's always nice at the cabin." The cabin, in turn, invoked the memory and stories of the recently deceased kinsman who had built it. The love of the outdoors Peter shared with this man had enabled them to forge a strong relationship as friends and kin, across sectarian boundaries, and the place evoked strong memories and an aspect of reflection in Peter himself.

On another occasion, while we were traveling back to Trout Lake from a hunting trip, Peter stated: "But when you're a Christian, you can still enjoy life. You can still go to the bush, enjoy nature. I'm with God all the time when I'm out there." Peter later described the bush as "heaven for me," stating that God is everywhere and his works evident, but nowhere moreso than in the bush.

One younger man, who did not identify strongly with either Christianity or traditional spirituality as far as I am aware, stated that he never felt frightened while hunting alone because God protected him in the bush. Even though he said that he did not "know" enough to "do" church "right," he felt close to God in hunting. This brings to mind the classical tradition of Northern Algonquian ethnology, in which hunting is seen as a holy and dialogical undertaking (*e.g.*, Speck 1935).

The degree to which Christianity and traditional religion have both become associated with contemporary modes of being in place can be seen in subtle modifications observed in an elder's stories regarding a place name. Elder Martin Okemow told me two stories (translated by Janet Netowastenum) about the origin of the placename, God's Lake (*manito sâkahikan*): one story concerned a trapper who heard the sound of spiritual drumming on the waves; another concerned the appearance of four horses, galloping under water. The former story closely resembles narratives of the origins of similar Cree names of other lakes ('Lac Ste. Anne,' 'Lake Manitoba'), which link drumming (and/or singing) of spirits with these lakes. Martin's second story, while retaining certain Cree mythological structures (such as the appearance of terrestrial animals as spiritual entities underwater [*cf.* Brightman 2002:83]), was understood by Martin and Janet as primarily a Christian story, due to its association with the Four Horsemen in the biblical book of Revelation. Martin told me these stories on two occasions (earlier translated by David Starr, a translation I did not record); neither he nor his translators/interlocutors saw the second story as inconsistent with the first. Martin's God's Lake stories mark the resacralization, within Christianity, of a place that already had spiritual power recognizable to those who knew how to experience it.

Although missionaries tended to de-emphasize place, arguably, the tendency of Pentecostal and Evangelical missionaries to promote their religion through camp meetings (held outdoors in the summer), and through the use of music and singing, provides structural substitutes for some features of traditional religion by promising an emplaced, discursive/musical spirituality on the land. Many tent meetings are held at old camping sites, which were also ceremonial sites; this plays a role in the affect on local people of rituals held at these known sites.

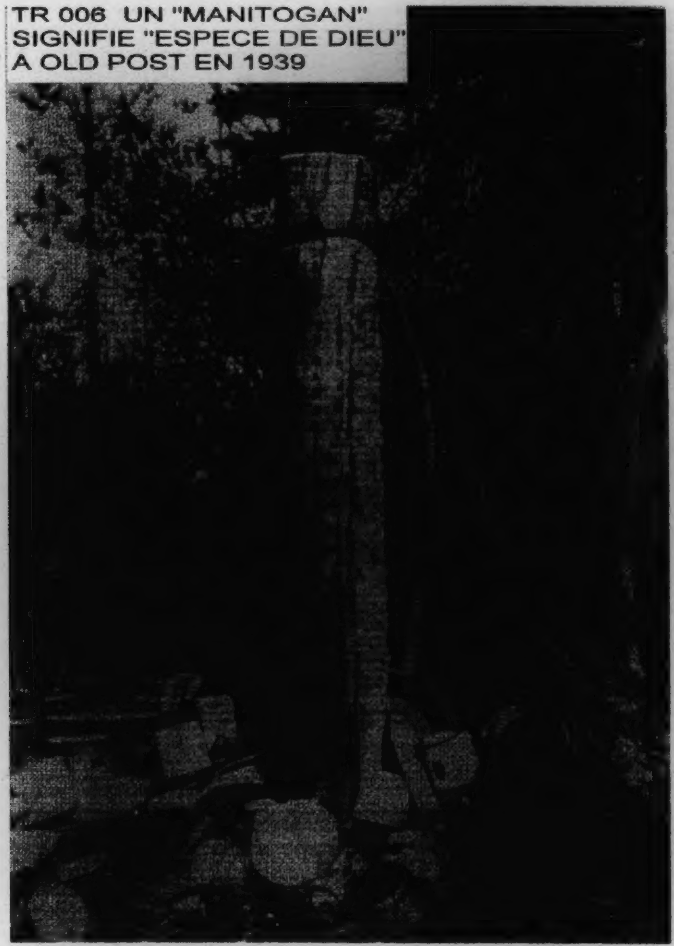


Figure 19: Reciprocity (SHGSR)

Reciprocity with spirits is an important component of traditional spirituality: relations with animals (or other spiritual entities such as plants and ice) and their "owner" spirits ('*powâkan*' suggesting a dream image [Brightman 2002:76] or tool) were sought and maintained by most men and some women. As the explorer David

Thompson wrote of his time with the Western Woods Cree in "The Musk Rat country" around 1800:

> Every man believes or wishes to believe that he has a familiar being who takes care of him, and warns him of danger, and other matters which otherwise he could not know; this imaginary being he calls his Poo-wog-gan (Thompson and Hopwood 1971:115).
>
> The forests... the Lakes and Rivers have all something of the manito about them, especially the Falls in the Rivers, and those to which the fish come to spawn. The Indians when the season is over frequently place their spears at the Manito stone at the fall, as an offering to the Spirit of the Fall, for the fish they have caught (Thompson 1993:212).

Thompson travelled for several years with the Western Cree prior to the arrival of missionaries in the region, learning their language and marrying a Cree woman (Charlotte Small). Although he was among the first Europeans to visit and map places such as Lac la Biche and Lesser Slave Lake, Thompson does not seem to have traveled within the Lesser Slave Lake Interior itself.

Among Thompson's many valuable observations are those on hunting rituals, the sacred character of dancing, Cree discourse and politeness strategies, and the spiritual or divine character of various terrestrial and celestial entities. Nevertheless, Thompson comments:

> I have always found it very difficult to learn their real opinion on what may be termed religious subjects. Asking them questions on the head is to no purpose; they will give the answer best adapted to avoid other questions and please the enquirer. My knowledge has been gained through living and travelling with them and in times of distress and danger hearing their prayers to invisible powers (Thompson and Hopwood 1971:110).

Thompson had scientific and literary training, and used systematic research methods (which he duly commented and reflected upon) combining linguistic analysis, observation, and elder interviews, to document Cree religion. As such he could be considered a proto-ethnographer of the Northwest.

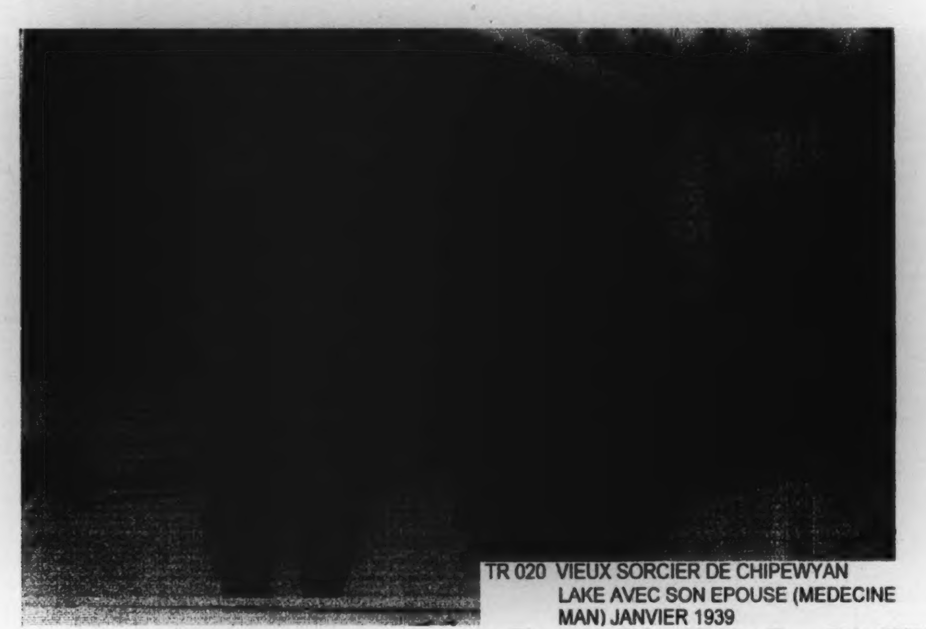
Like Thompson, George Nelson was a fine writer with a religious cast of mind and some classical education. Nelson's letter-journal (Nelson *et al* 1988) provides further source material for pre-missionary Western Woods Cree religion. Trading near La Ronge, Saskatchewan in the 1820s, Nelson provides further insight into Cree spirit dreaming in his letter-journal:

> **[The Spirits, their Shapes, and their Songs]**
> As I have said before, the purpose of these Dreams is to dive into futurity. Every thing in nature appears unto them, but in the Shape of a human-being. They dream they meet a man who asks them (after some preliminary conversation of course), "Dost thou know me? (who or what I am?)"
> "No."
> "Follow me then," replies this stranger. The indian follows – the other leads him to his abode and again makes the inquiry – the answer is perhaps as before. Then the stranger assumes his proper form, which is perhaps that of a Tree, a Stone, a fish, &c, &c. and after rechanging several times in this matter, until such times as the 2nd becomes perfectly to know him, then this stranger gives him to smoke, learns him *his* Song, &c, thus addressing him: "Now don't you remember my Song?... whenever you will wish to call upon me, Sing this Song, and I shall not be far – I will come and do for you what you require" (*ibid*:35).

Nelson's account underscores here and elsewhere the importance of discourses with and from the spirit world, such as songs learned from a spirit.

Spiritual discourses animate not only personal prayers but also public ceremonies. Other important knowledge is gained through similar, 'dreamed' encounters with spirits. Such encounters could be the source of knowledge and power, both temporal and spiritual. Hunting and eating practices (such as the elevation of some animal remains) and taboos were oriented around this relationship of exchange with animal spirits, who were believed to provide food to respectful hunters (Tanner 1979). Some powerful people gained from their spirit helpers the ability to change shape.

Many of the historical Algonquian practices I refer to above are no longer undertaken at Trout Lake, so I discuss them only briefly. Multiple consultants remembered seeing or hearing about such practices as the elevation of animal remains (*cf.* Francois Auger. quoted in Sinclair 1998:7), but stated they did not know why these practices had been undertaken. As I have mentioned, behind this modesty and discretion likely exists a significant body of knowledge. While many young people may have only a fragmentary knowledge of Cree spiritual traditions, among elders (even those who did not practice traditions) more authority and contextual knowledge to discuss this oral tradition are often evident. Certainly, the practice of "vision questing" continued widely in northern Alberta during the early 20th century (Ned Gladue, quoted in Sinclair 1998:69), and still exists among some families and communities.



TR 020 VIEUX SORCIER DE CHIPEWYAN LAKE AVEC SON EPOUSE (MEDECINE MAN) JANVIER 1939

Figure 20: Elders Visiting Trout Lake (SHGSR)

While most people today might not seek a spiritual helper in the traditional manner, belief in animal spirits is widely held in the isolated communities. Animal spirits are mentioned to explain unusual natural phenomena. As an example, while traveling in the bush near Cadotte Lake I noticed at a cabin site a herd of horses, one of which was a white stallion. A local man in his sixties (who had worked with Evangelical missionaries as a school maintenance man some 50 years earlier at Little Buffalo) later told me that he had also noticed this, and had discussed it with his elders. How could the horses survive the winter without being killed by wolves?

My interlocutor stated: "The wolves' leader is a big white wolf. You've got to look at it like an animal. Animals have a creator, just like us. They see him as their leader. If it had been brown they would have killed it." So, in this man's view, the wolves were giving homage to their leader by sparing the white horse. This example shows the salience of such "dream spirits" in many local people's discussions of daily events.

Another woman, whose grandfather and great grandfather were well-known ceremonialists, stated, "Maybe that's why I have visions sometimes." Many people credit spiritual power with saving them from accidents, fights, or spiritual attacks. As Goulet (1998) suggests, there is generally a strong linkage between knowledge (or perception) and experience as sources of power in subarctic tradition. Some knowledge can only be gained by contact with powerful others. The tradition of not discussing powers (Meneen, quoted in Meili 1991:62) means that it is prudent to assume that at least some individuals in Trout Lake and elsewhere are still actively seeking and using such powers and knowledge. "I keep my culture." one man simply told me when I asked him about his personal spiritual practices. I later learned that this man owns a pipe and practices ceremonies.

Waugh has described "original Cree tradition" as "that haunting reality" (1996:44) which is (or was) out there, but which cannot be accessed by the analyst. While peoples' ideas about what constitutes "Indian tradition" continue to animate much of what happens in the communities today, little of this occurs under the conscious rubric of traditional religion. As such Cree religion does not consist of "serial worlds along a continuum" but rather, "converging streams of colour" (Waugh 1996:39). The contemporary Cree approach to religious practice is "interstitial" (Waugh 1996:3), existing beyond (but dependant upon) other religions (including "original Cree tradition"). While many state that traditional spirituality has died down, I assert that traditional spirituality not only influences doctrines and practices current among Cree Pentecostals, but that its approach to being in the world is still evident in many interactions people have with animals and other non-human persons, in the region generally and also among Pentecostals.

Traditionally in northern Alberta, both land and resources were seen as gifts from the Supreme Being, with access to these resources largely mediated by other spiritual beings and shared by people who moved through the land (Smith 1981:263). Cree people entered into reciprocal relations with the spirit world in a variety of ways. As such, hunting and other land-based activities were inherently religious in character. The Cree's skill as medicine people (based on knowledge of plants and ceremonies) was highly regarded by other tribes, and this served to promote Cree trading fortunes (Harmon 1973:269, Fidler *et al* 1991:55).

Plants were crucial to spiritual practice, and continue so to the present. Typically, the knowledge or "gift" to use plants was held by older persons (frequently women). The knowledge of medicine plants was closely related to gifts gained in ceremonies and the knowledge to put on ceremonies. Where a man might dream of a game animal, a woman on a spiritual retreat might dream of a healing plant. Like killing an animal, the act of picking a plant was itself a spiritually potent dialogical undertaking, through which the harvester entered into relations to be continued and extended when the plant was prepared and distributed to one with an infirmity. Effectiveness depended on the correct combination of belief and practice on the part of harvester, administrator, and recipient.

In at least one recent study of traditional land use in Trout and Peerless, certain elders refused to share their knowledge of plants for fear of upsetting this balance (Crampton 1990:3), a problem that also raised its head during a similar study I participated in at Cadotte Lake in 2005. Also, reluctance of "the local Pentecostal faction" to participate in a study involving traditional plants threatened a community-based forestry research project, designed by David Young and Craig Candler at Wabasca (Stevenson 1999:25). On a similar note, Dawn Martin-Hill documents the divisiveness of a similar dispute among women activists at Little Buffalo (2008:150). Clearly, many parties still feel powerfully about traditional plant use and its cultural significance, creating potential disagreements on the level of belief, practice, and representation.

The sharing of plants, meat, and other bush resources relate closely to traditional religious values based on reciprocity with people, animals, and spirits (Tanner 1979). Traditionally, Cree believed in a complex of powers representing the spirits of animals and ancestors. These spirits were a greater part of daily life than the Supreme Being, and accordingly were propitiated through sacrifice. For instance, meat or fat could be put on a fire to thank the spirit of the animal who provided it (Harmon 1973:324-326); some local people continue to carry out this type of ceremony. Similarly, in the spirit of reciprocity, Cree used *manitohkâna* (images of god) to provide offerings. For instance, one would leave offerings around a statue at an important fishing site, to give thanks for bountiful fish harvests (Harmon 1973:320*)*. Local elders used *manitohkâna* and sacred dolls into the postwar period. People would leave a gun or a pan at the statues, in hopes of future hunting success or material prosperity.

While I rarely noticed this type of consciously ritualized reciprocity during my fieldwork, I did notice a tendency of people to expect animals they had stalked, shot, or trapped to behave in certain "co-operative" ways. For instance, one man complained to me that he had shot a moose only to watch the fatally wounded moose (which he referred to as "the stupid son of a bitch") stagger into a small muskeg lake, making retrieval difficult; both this hunter and his prey (strapped on a trailer behind his truck) were soaking wet and somewhat muddy from this recent mishap when I came upon them at a gas bar. On another occasion, while setting a trap in a muskrat's 'push-up' (a hole in the ice surrounded by plant debris) my companion muttered out loud to an unseen rat; he implored it to come into the trap, "like you're supposed to." I do not suggest that these men (at least one of whom was a Pentecostal) understood themselves as being in formal relationships with animal spirits, but that the dialogical structures of such relationships persist today in ways that, while they may be unexpected to the analyst, are normative to the Cree.

The local practice and history of Cree ceremonialism

Perhaps best understood not as a "religion" or system of doctrines, but rather as practices flowing out of a socially mediated worldview or ontology, Cree traditions continue to animate much of community life. Even in Trout Lake, where public traditional ceremonies do not occur and any private traditional rituals are low profile, this holds true. Some consultants insisted that many people in Trout Lake, even Pentecostals, continued to use “witchcraft” to help themselves and even to harm others. In other communities, particularly Little Buffalo Lake, Fox Lake, Garden River, Tallcree, and John D’Or Prairie, Cree spirituality is the main religion. Ceremonies, including the tea dance, sweat lodge, and shaking tent, are held in these communities. Many people in Trout, even those who are not strongly affiliated with Pentecostalism, reject or fear these practices: “They kill each other with it over there,” as “Aristide” stated when telling me about “witchcraft” at Tallcree and John D’Or.

People’s discursive association between traditional spirituality, fear, and death flows partially from the tendency of successive generations of missionaries (both Catholic and Protestant, but particularly Protestant evangelists since the 1950s) to diabolicize “Indian Tradition.” Nevertheless, people’s perceptions about Indian tradition continue, interstitially, to play a major role in directing their interpretations of Christianity and their approach to life in general. Indeed, early Pentecostal missionaries may have attempted to capitalize on the Cree’s attachment to traditional forms, by briefly incorporating the sweat lodge into their practice[87] and by maintaining a lexical set for names of the divine that closely resembles earlier Catholic and traditional terms.

A number of examples could be given to underline the general character of traditional spirituality as a kind of folk ontology in the region. One powerful example is belief in the *wîhtiko*, a Cree mythical figure, which could be glossed as ‘cannibal monster in human form' or 'Indian Vampire.' As I discussed in Chapter Three, a well-documented manifestation of this phenomenon occurred at Trout Lake in 1896; many other occurrences were seen elsewhere around this time. All community members I asked about this (of all ages and religious commitments) informed me that they believed in *wîhtikowak*, specifically in the 1896 local manifestation. Nearly everyone in the community knows this story, although most people are reluctant to share such knowledge with strangers, as I found out (*cf.* Carlson 2005:133-34). The 1896 story was proposed as the subject for a school play (cancelled due to a death in the community), and is frequently the subject of narratives told locally. One man told the story to his family at their cabin, in Cree,[88] but his children found it so frightening that he had to give up this practice.

---

[87] This practice, which was mentioned by Waugh (1996:235), has been discontinued among Evangelicals/Pentecostals in northern Alberta, as far as I am aware.

Such belief in spirits and monsters, together with a widespread fear of witchcraft and Satanic activity, renders some stories from popular culture equally alarming to many local people. As one example, I present data observed at a local production of *Hamlet*, which was co-presented in Trout Lake by students (coached by their teachers), with a traveling theatre troupe from Edmonton, who came up for the day to fill the major roles in the play. During an intermission, I asked one local hunter, backhoe operator, and church musician his opinion, he replied, "It was pretty scary." Earlier in the play, during the appearance of King Hamlet's ghost, a little girl in the audience had gasped, whispering alarmedly: "ahcâhk!" ('spirit') That is, fear of spirits (both from the Christian and Cree contexts) is widespread in the communities.

Many community members continue to orient their belief and practice in a traditional manner, while consciously rejecting some aspects of Indian tradition. Several people were reluctant to answer direct questions about whether or not they believed in Indian tradition, while agreeing that many other community members did so believe, or that others had special powers. Often, however, when I reviewed my fieldnotes of such discussions, it became clear to me that my interlocutors do believe in spiritual activity. Even many people who generally maintained a secular or irreligious stance in our discussions told me that they respected the powers of the "grandfathers" (a term of respect for spiritually powerful persons that does not necessarily imply kinship or even humanity).

---

[88] Teenagers point out that the story is scarier in Cree.

Janet Netowastenum provided me with two illustrative responses on separate occasions. On one occasion, she stated as follows:

> I'm caught in the middle. I know our traditions work because I've tried them, but I know going to church works too. But people say with going to church you go to heaven; with witchcraft you go to hell. It says in the Bible have no god but me.

On another occasion, when I asked her if other community members believe in the traditional practices regarding animal remains and relations with animal spirits, she paused for a long time and stated: "They *believe* in it. They don't *practice* it. They know it works, but they left it behind when they heard the gospel."

The persistence of Cree ontology shows the poor success the original Catholic and Anglican missionaries had in disenchanting the lifeworld of their charges. Conversely, one might also say that the subsequent Evangelical/Pentecostal efforts to diabolicize the Cree lifeworld were also not entirely successful, as many Cree (even devout Pentecostals) tend to selectively maintain at least some aspects of traditional spirituality. For instance, many people in Trout and Peerless, who identified themselves as Pentecostals, had attended traditional ceremonies recently in other communities (or decades earlier in the Trout Lake area) and were able to describe in general terms the principles of such ceremonies without resorting to diabolicization.

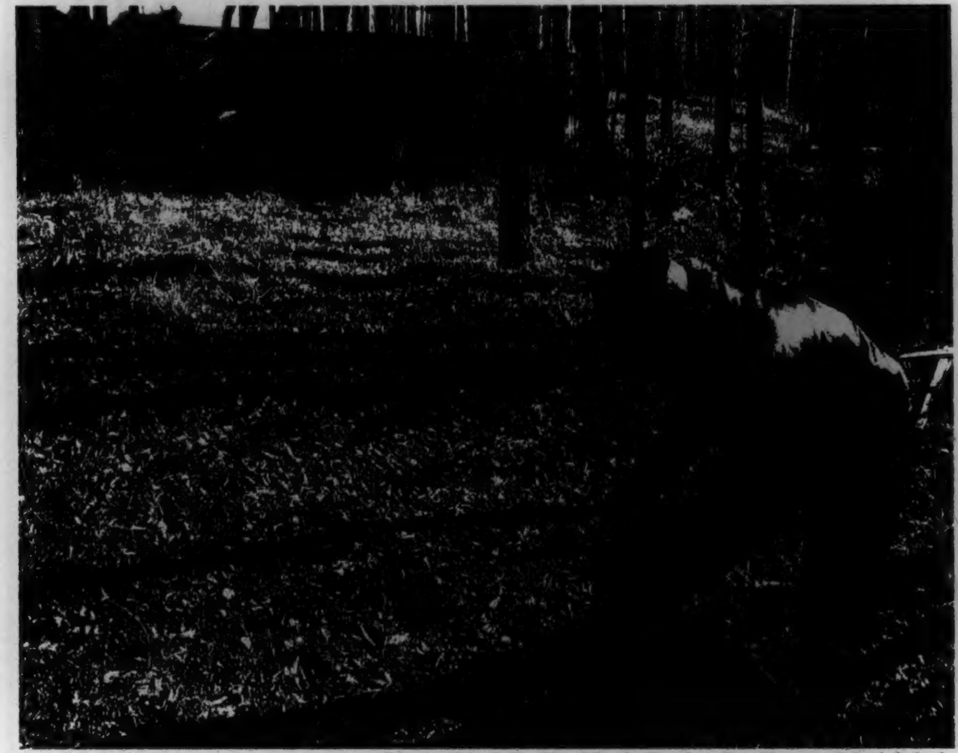


Figure 21: John Jim Houle Drying Rat Root at Mariah Lake

The status of medicinal plants is a topic for some debate among Pentecostals, some of whom profess to avoid both traditional and western medicine. Even so, many people, including religious leaders, continue to use medicinal plants: "I *use* it. I don't worship it," said Emile Houle about ratroot, which he takes for a sore throat. Still other Pentecostals (Josephine Laboucan, quoted in Laboucan 1995a) stated explicitly that faith healing is the modern correspondence of the divine gift of traditional plants.

The reluctance among some Pentecostals to consume medicinal plants flows partially from the belief that the harvest and consumption of such plants is an inherently spiritual act (in the humble thankfulness aspect of *kâkesimowin*, which I described earlier), and so is incompatible with Christianity. Note that the ontological basis for this assumption is Cree as much as Christian; plants are respected as powerful entities, which cannot be approached without spiritual assistance. This shows the powerful hold of key cultural concepts on many converts who, even in rejecting Cree practice, do so by upholding Cree ontological assumptions. The example of plants also demonstrates the disagreements between and within missionary Christianity and local communities about which elements of local practice constitute "culture" rather than "religion" (Cannell 2006:26, Jacobs 1996, Martin-Hill 2008:150).

kayâs ayisiyiniwak ('long ago people')

In autumn, 2004, as Andrew Orr translated, Louie Cardinal (an elder who was raised by his grandfather, spiritual leader Samuel St.-Arnaud) told me about traditional spirituality, its relation to practice, and its means of transmission orally. I have chosen to quote from this edited excerpt at length because Louie's is an authoritative account of Cree tradition prior to sedentarization, told by one who still has a strong linkage to traditional spirituality and bush life (as many local people have told me). Aged over 70, Louie spends long portions of each winter on his trapline. He and his wife act as informal advisors to younger community members interested in traditional stories, bush life, and spirituality. In this capacity, Louie is also involved in the manufacture of traditional objects such as drums.

Louie's discourse, as translated by Andrew, touches on a number of key themes in traditional practice, linking together individual knowledge and practice with both the land and with public ceremonial life.

> His grandfather had mentioned how people used to live way back. They usually never wore any clothes just a cover, that they used to wear.

Basically most everything was moosehide. Moosehide pants and moosehide jacket. That's how they used to clothe themselves in winter. But way back then, they used to have a certain kind of musket that they used.[89]

They shared and they worked together. When somebody does something you help each other. But at that time there was no law to follow. That's how they lived, by helping each other. Like sharing, whoever kills a moose they help each other.

I asked him about the *help. They* (*i.e.,* spirits*) helped.* Like way back then on the land people got sick too. There's a few people, who would know that, how to use roots and everything. That's the only way of survival, there was no hospitals so people used to know how to use roots.

If somebody gets sick they respect those roots and help each other. And some would use a sweat lodge and pow-wows (*wihkotowin*). Looking for a vision, for the future, that's how they use these things. And that's what they use a lot probably, the roots, the land, for health. They know how to use all those resources. So he says his grandfather, he knows a lot about those. Even when you pick roots you don't just go pick. You have to put tobacco where they came from, the roots, you do that.

He said, like way back then, if somebody put a pow-wow it's only like, his time. After that he has to pass down, how he knows how to put the pow-wows eh. It's basically a given thing. Spirits that teach them what to do, how to help people out. Same thing like that with the roots. The spirit taught how to make that potion to cure the people. These are what these people back there are passing down, like they keep doing that all the way down. And that's how people used to know what to do, like dreaming things to have the help of the spirit eh?

See pow-wows, one of the reasons, those are put in fall and spring: The spring is the beginning of the roots and also the fall is the ending of the season. That's why pow-wow's like that, because of the respect of the roots and everything.

Another reason is that they approach elders to teach them a song, the history that they learn from the elders' songs when they want to help out in the pow-wow. They can help out in the pow-wow, in the singing, that's why. That's why they want to learn those songs so they could help out.

Because way back then, that was the only lifestyle so the people were strong up there, because of the way that they're living, he says. And, like, my grandfather, he said, I still respect my grandfather because of the teachings that he taught me. I still hear him a lot of times, he said, because what grandfather had taught me,

---

[89] The period described is likely the early to mid-nineteenth century.

> he learned things from people that had died way back there like, what they had to do. They taught us eh…
>
> He said that one of the things that he's really been thinking about a lot is that way back when I was young he said his grandfather was old and had taught him that. To prophesy and some of the things that grandfather had been telling me about his life, to be passed on way past then. Grandfather said: But for you there's going to be a different religion coming, and that's where a lot of divisions will happen. Those, all those things, how Grandfather said, I've *seen all* those things, he said. I've been thinking about it a lot because Grandfather had told me what was going to be and what to expect, he said.

The tensions between Louie's and Andrew's account of traditional religion, as a positive, life-affirming practice, and those of some other community members (who see this time as one of fear and ignorance), suggest that it is foolhardy to attempt any final (etic) definition of Traditional Cree Religion and its relation to contemporary culture. However, by using divergent perspectives, both contemporary and historical, and a similar array of methods, we can at least sketch out the field on which this struggle to define culture is executed.

Louie's remarks demonstrate the centrality of the *wihkotowin* in Western Woods Cree ceremonial life prior to the 1950s-1960s. The *wihkotowin* is a ritual complex combining features of dancing, feasting, sacrifice, singing, drumming, praying, gifting, visiting, and healing.[90] Traditionally it was undertaken in spring and fall (and also perhaps at mid-summer), at important seasonal gathering sites. As such it was a major feature of Cree social life, building solidarity among microbands throughout the season of their largest gatherings. It continues to serve an integrative function: by honouring relations to ancestors and the spirit world; and by sacralizing items of personal power such as bundles, bringing them into the rhythm of the seasons and of plant life. Bundles are elevated in a most sacred part of the lodge. A bundle carrier, or "someone who knows something," puts the ceremony on, while teaching younger apprentices who will someday do the same. What follow is my reconstruction from a wide range of ethically permissible data. Martin-Hill offers another account of "Tea Dances" within the region (near Little Buffalo) including photos (taken by missionary Rolland Smith) from a 1956 Tea Dance (2008:55;95-110; 115).

---

[90] I have heard the *wihkotowin* referred to as the Pow-wow, Tea Dance, Round Dance, Dance of the Ancestors, Ghost Dance (not to be confused with the US variety described in Kehoe 1989), Medicine Dance, and Medicine Lodge Dance. 'Pow-wow' (note the similarity to *powâkan*) and 'Tea Dance' are likely the most popular local English usages. The situation is further complicated by the fact that many people use relatively free variation in the English terms (Weber-Pillwax 2003:134-135) for *wihkotowin* and *maskisimowin* ['lame dance']. The latter refers generally to a more social, secular, dance, where it was permitted to drink alcohol (Personal Communication: Paul Okemow).

The ceremony consists of dancing, in a clockwise direction and in single file, around four fires. The fires burn within an elongated lodge constructed from three conical teepee frames, partially covered with canvass or boughs but open across the top; another fire burns outside the lodge. The fires are tended by young men who also distribute the tea, food, and gifts stored amongst the fires. People sit around the lodge's edge, leaving open a trail for dancing clockwise around the central fires. Opposite the entry sit the singers and drummers; they take turns singing songs learned in dreams or from ancestors, over four rounds of singing, dancing, smoking, and feasting. This ceremony can last most of the night.

I have attempted to develop my understanding of the *wihkotowin*, by interviewing elders about it, by studying secondary accounts, and also by attending the rituals themselves from 2004 to 2008. This is challenging, as my main study communities do not hold the *wihkotowin*. Rather, I have had to develop my contacts in neighbouring Cree communities, which turned out to be a beneficial aspect of the project. Ida Houle of Peerless Lake had told me about Mike, an elder from Wabasca.

Mike leads many traditional ceremonies, including ceremonial duties in a BCN-sponsored mass at the Lac Ste. Anne Pilgrimage, in 2006, and a pipe ceremony at a youth culture camp, near Trout Lake, also in 2006. Mike is involved in interviewing and translating for elders for oral history and litigation projects. I was already somewhat acquainted with Mike through government consultations, but began speaking to him regularly by phone upon Ida's recommendation.

Mike then introduced me to John C., who leads traditional ceremonies at Loon River. Fr. Paul Hernou later told me that John C. is the only person in Loon River "who practices his culture."[91] John C. told me he had learned his practice from a late family member, Norbert (*pîskwas* ['the nighthawk']) Letendre (*c.*1905- *c.*1995), formerly of Trout Lake; *pîskwas* is also well known to current Trout Lake elders. It is said that when *pîskwas* sang, the *wihkotowin* fires burned brighter.

I began my attendance at northern traditional ceremonies by attending a sweat lodge with John C., and a few people from Little Buffalo, in May, 2006, near the end of my fieldwork. I found the sweat to be quite a singular experience. I returned to this spot in June, 2006, for a *wihkotowin* led by John C., Mike, and others (including Dwight, from Little Buffalo, whom I had met at the sweat lodge). Later that month, I attended a *wihkotowin* put on by Mike at Wabasca with many of the same singers and drummers. I attended another ceremony at Wabasca in October, 2007. In June, 2008, I attended another ceremony at John's and had further consultations with him and Mike.[92] Each of these events was attended by approximately 40 people.

---

[91] This exclusivist usage by an outsider of the term, "culture," as synonymous with "traditional spirituality" is common, but perhaps unfortunate. It might seem surprising to many of the people at Loon River (who speak Cree, hunt, and reckon kin traditionally) to find that they are actually not "practicing their culture" in Father Paul's view.

Today, most community members in Trout and Peerless, aged less than 50, have never seen a *wihkotowin*. However, some younger people have a keen interest in the "way of the grandfathers and great grandfathers," when "they would go tea dancing." This usage in English ("they would go tea dancing ") reflects the structure of the Cree verb form "*ewihkotohk*," which implies an indefinite actor or ongoing event. Elders most often use this verb form, *'wihkotohk*, rather than the more static *wihkotowin*.

The Dene Drum Dance has attracted attention from a range of ethnographers (Asch 1988, Goulet 1998, Ridington 1978); however, less attention has been paid to the dances of the Cree (but see Meyer 1975, Moore 1993). Cree healer Doreen Ducharme suggests that Western Woods Cree and Dene spiritual practice are closely related; as such the Dene literature, emphasizing the dance as a trail to heaven inspired by prophets, may be of some use to analysts of the Cree situation. Presently, I am choosing to foreground the perspectives of Cree-Métis scholars from Alberta, who have written graduate theses that have helped me to understand the importance of the *wihkotowin* and other ceremonies in constituting a Cree worldview, through their approaches to combining academic and indigenous knowledge. Weber-Pillwax's research, on *Indigenous Identity and Consciousness* (2003), is based to some extent on time spent (as a teacher) in Trout Lake and other isolated communities. In a discussion that may be somewhat influenced by her contacts with Frs. Hernou and Vandersteene (2003:120) she describes the *wihkotowin* as encompassing most clearly many aspects of indigenous identity, as "a spiritual event that ensures the continuity of a particular relationship between the people and the ancestors" (2003:128). A crucial component of the *wihkotowin* is the *macustehekiwin* ('burnt offering'), which feeds the spirits and ancestors. It is also believed that people feed the ancestors be eating food themselves. Personal sacred bundles are closely associated with the *wihkotowin*, connecting private and public ritual life. Bundles are opened in the lodge, bringing in historical persons or events, so that the ancestors are part of the ceremony. As such, a bundle can be understood as a text with history (Weber-Pillwax 2003:129-130). Gifts and sacrifices are also texts of peoples' wishes for themselves or their loved ones.

---

[92] I had also attended a *wihkotowin* in June, 2004, in another Alberta Cree community, upon the invitation of a classmate, who was helping out there.

The *wihkotowin* falls into a broader lexical category for ritual practices: *isihcikewin* ('a making')[93] or ceremony (2003:132), a category which also includes the *kosapahicikewin* ['shaking tent'] (2003:182). The shaking tent, which was important locally, still occurs in northern Alberta (Martin-Hill 2008:78), and has been described in rich detail by ethnographers elsewhere in the Northern Algonquian world (see Preston 1975b, Hallowell 1942).

Elmer Ghostkeeper documents ceremonial and social life in the Metis Settlement at Paddle Prairie (*c.* 1960), a very useful basis for comparison to Trout Lake's history. For Ghostkeeper, ceremony and ritual are important means of honouring connection to "the living world" (*misiwe uske*) through "spirit gifting" (*mekiachahkwewin*). Spirit gifting connects body, mind, and emotions (Ghostkeeper 1996:6). Such reciprocity with the dead continues to play an important role in belief and practice in Cree communities today, as the following example shows.

---

[93] Waugh translates *isihcikewin* as a "large banquet or resource that is then combined with *kihci* (*i.e.*, implying "good" or "holy") to mean ceremonial, that is, *kihci isihcikewin* is to carry out a community-wide sacred activity" (2001:486). Plains Cree ceremonialist Ken Roan indirectly supported Waugh's use of the term, "resource," by referring to sacred plants (a physical predicate of ceremony) as "my resource." Ghostkeeper (1996:6) translates *isehcikewin* as 'ritual' and *wuskawewin* (literally 'movement') as 'ceremony.' Makokis translates *isihycikewin* as "organized, arrangement, grounded in storytelling tradition" (2001:113). Participating in oral traditional transmission, then, also constitutes conducting a rite of this type [*iyin'to isihtwawina*: 'common or people's rite' expressed as a conjunct verb form] (Lightning 1997:113).

"Have a sandwich!"

Funerals and associated ritual complexes provide an opportunity to see the ritual interaction of Pentecostal practices with the religious norms of the community as a whole (Stuckenberger 2005; *cf.* Metcalf and Huntington 1991). At such times, deeper beliefs and feelings come sharply into focus. During my fieldwork I attended two funerals, and have also spoken to many community members about other funerals and bereavement practices. The necessity of a Pentecostal funeral for non-believers (generally the most practical option in Trout and Peerless) is a central illustration of the efforts by Pentecostals to portray their faith as the leading, public, 'official,' religion of Trout Lake and Peerless Lake, in spite of a more diverse reality of local practices. Nevertheless, as multivocalic events, funerals and associated rituals also function to express less orthodox views. Such discourses and practices provide a clearer indication of the religious beliefs and practices of the majority of community members, than my church-based ritual fieldwork.

Most community members do not attend church regularly, but may feel the need to make a spiritual statement or connection at a time when they or their families are facing ultimate reality in the form of death. During the first generation of local Evangelical/Pentecostal Christianity, sometimes the families of recent adherents still chose Catholic funerals for their loved ones (see Chapter Three). An echo of this ambiguity can be seen today in the routine deployment, at contemporary funerals, of symbols, discourses, and practices from both Cree and Catholic traditions.

At one funeral I attended, a cousin of the deceased wrote a statement, which a Master of Ceremonies read aloud and which, among other things, recounted the author's presence at the deceased's first moose kill. The kill had occurred while she and the deceased were hunting at a site suggested to the deceased by their grandfather. This conscious tacking back to the emplacement of local culture and the correct way of interacting with others (including animals), at a time of reflection over the meaning of life, loss, and kinship, again shows the salience of the bush, and its attendant kinship obligations, in local practice and social relations.

Another family member wrote: "He was my cousin but I consider him a brother; I will always consider his wife my sister-in-law." This may demonstrate the salience of traditional kinship relations (particularly the bond of parallel cousins, who are considered siblings), which is well borne out in community discourse. Still other written submissions referred to the deceased's love of joking, movies, visiting, and "girlin'."

While people who are practicing Christians may find some comfort in their faith at times of death, those who are less involved in local church life also draw upon religious and other symbols at these times. One example of the use of a non-Pentecostal symbol at a Pentecostal funeral was the presence of a (Roman Catholic) icon of the Sacred Heart of Jesus (along with candles, personal photos, and a ball cap) on a table near the coffin. At another funeral (which I did not attend) traditional drummers from a neighbouring community played in a program that also included gospel music, arousing the ire of some attendees. In spite of such ire, polysemy represented by such diverse symbols is probably close to the normal local way of thinking about religious practice locally.

The tendency of many community members to marshal multiple religious symbols as the situation requires recalls Marie-Pierre Bousquet's (2007a) emphasis on individual choice in Pentecostal conversion, indeterminacy between religious movements, and of one's ability to be both (for instance) Catholic and Pentecostal at the same time. See above Janet Netawastenum's remarks on the tension between two ways of practicing religion, both of which she believed efficacious. Similarly, Pierre Beaucage and Deirdre Meintel (2007:12) lament the tendency of many researchers to recapitulate the "monolithic and exclusive" religious categories posited by religious leaders, rather than the experience of practitioners "on the ground." Beaucage and Meintel speculate that such a tendency towards a "logique métisse" (quoting Amselle) or "religion à la carte" (quoting Bibby) may be more the norm than the black and white categories suggested by (for instance) the census, or by certain Pentecostal leaders. My surprise at seeing the sacred heart icon on a table at a funeral (in a community and extended family with few to no practicing Catholics, as I shall show in Chapter Five) opened the door to understanding this "religion à la carte."

The funeral is the climax of a days-long cycle of mourning and preparatory activity, the most social aspect of which is the wake. Discourse and behaviour observed at wakes provide important data verifying the continued salience of traditional spirituality in community life. During the wake ('*enipipin*'),[94] photos of the deceased are passed around. Many photos I saw focused on family and social life, as well as bush life, including photos of cabins built by the deceased. People sit at tables in the community hall, loosely grouped along lines of family and/or gender. A group of women works in the kitchen; they move around passing out coffee, tea, and sandwiches. The deceased is lain in an open coffin (having been attended to by a funeral home in one of the nearer towns), with photos and items of a personal or spiritual nature on tables nearby. In the large, multi-purpose, community centre, a clearly identifiable empty space separates the coffin from the social area of tables, stage, entrance, and kitchen. The former is an area where mourners may retreat for silent time with the deceased.

---

[94] This word could relate to *nipiw* (s/he is dead) and/or *nipepayiw* (s/he falls asleep).

Family members and the visibly bereaved are supported by the many attendees and take great comfort from the solidarity evident in the community at such times, as many people told me. Not only community members, but family members and friends from Aboriginal communities for hundreds of kilometers around are in attendance. I was repeatedly told that people would appreciate seeing my family and me at wakes, such is the emphasis on making and maintaining personal connections at these times.

People stay with the body round the clock for several days at a wake. The overall atmosphere is not represented as religious, but does not seem quite secular either.[95] After a day's comings and goings, the hall begins to fill up after 8pm. Later (perhaps around 11pm, when numbers are at their peak) a short service with gospel music is held, as church musicians take the stage in a unique opportunity to reach the unchurched at a vulnerable moment. After midnight, many older people leave, while younger people stay throughout the night in an atmosphere of quiet reflection and sober visiting. It is considered essential that some people remain in the hall at all times throughout this vigil.

---

[95] I heard one man jokingly correct himself at a community hall wake after "swearing in church," but that was just as the gospel music was beginning to play.

The purpose of the wake is, as I was told by Aristide, "to keep the body company." During this time "the body" occupies a liminal space and status where, judging from practices evident at wakes and funerals, it is considered neither fully dead nor fully alive. Thus, the intent of the wakes (which last approximately three days and three nights) is not only to provide comfort and company for the family *but also for the deceased*. I have collected data showing that some Cree Pentecostals continue to believe in a continued spiritual (yet also embodied) co-presence of the (recently) dead person (as distinct from the corpse). This mirrors the central ceremony of the traditional Cree ritual calendar, the wihkotowin, or 'dance of the ancestors,' as an attempt to re-order relations both with the dead and the living. Adrian Jacobs (1996), an Iroquois Pentecostal leader, also identified traditional Iroquois funerals as one area where Pentecostals follow the practice of other community members in taking steps to comfort the lingering departed through a traditional feast. Jacobs bemoans this tendency, but his mention of it confirms that funerary practices are an important site for the performance of residual traditional values in many Aboriginal communities, as my data will show for Trout Lake.

While attending one wake, I found myself at a table of male acquaintances ranging from a neo-traditionalist in his twenties to a church leader in his fifties. At this man's wake people made a prolonged effort to eat together, be sociable, and not refer to the deceased by name (although this last practice was not always borne out in other circumstances and after the wake sometimes appeared to be flouted deliberately). At different times of the evening, I was repeatedly asked if I had had a sandwich. Eventually, while I was talking about church music with one man, someone else leaned over to interrupt our conversation and told me on no uncertain terms (a very rare event in itself) that I would have to "*Have a sandwich.*" As I was drinking tea, I was not hungry and replied that I had eaten. "Enough for two?" one man (a Pentecostal leader) interjected, his eyebrow arched. At this point I got the message and said, "I don't want to offend anyone." Rene, a younger, yet more spiritually traditional, man (who earlier had inquired discretely about my appetite) said: "You're *going* to offend if you don't have a sandwich." So I did eat at the first possibility thereafter.

Being told explicitly that one is about to offend was infrequent during my fieldwork and is not something to be taken lightly in any event. The "sandwich" experience suggested to me that people strongly believe in the need to nourish the body through eating food themselves, during this ritual.[96] The "sandwich" discussion parallels another, which I experienced when I attended a wihkotowin in 2004. I was generously offered large amounts of tea, meat, soup, cigarettes, and berries, in the implicit understanding that eating it would feed the dead, who were being honoured with music and dancing. Other attendees then discreetly inquired, repeatedly, about the state and whereabouts of my meal. This bears a strong resemblance to my experience at the wake. I now recognize that my interlocutors at the wake (few of whom had attended or would willingly attend a wihkotowin, or express belief in its principles) were guiding me in observing the same practice: enacting an embodied relationship with the deceased.

Note that my acquaintance at the wake did *not* say, "You're going to offend *me*." This leaves the door open to recognition of present other(s) dead. Honouring the dead is a fundamental underpinning of the traditional Cree religious worldview, exemplified in the practices of sacrifice, ceremony, and ritual constituting "spirit gifting" (Ghostkeeper 1996:7). Spirit gifting is essential to maintain relations with others, and ultimately to maintain life itself. Similar principles can be seen in operation at a Cree Pentecostal wake.

---

[96] See McNally 2000:3-4 for a strikingly similar urban Ojibwe example of this practice in the USA.

While the "sandwich" conversation was occurring, we sat near the stage, so that one member in our religiously mixed group could participate in the gospel music service, which was being set up throughout our discussion. That is to say that belief in, and practice flowing out of, at least some aspects of Cree spirituality (including ritualized elements of spirit gifting as seen at the wake) are upheld by many community members without regard to age or formal religious affiliation. From a research perspective, the sandwich conversation is significant in two ways. The first is the importance of studying practice rather than stated belief, which relates to the methodological primacy of fieldwork and participant observation. The second is the continued relevance of core concepts in anthropology such as reciprocity, gifts, and semiotic study of public rituals and life cycle passages. This exemplifies the importance of studying publicly accessible ritual expressions of solidarity, such as wakes. At such times, the polysemy of religious discourse and practice can be clearly seen in popular behaviour and speech. Such polysemy is occasionally evident in the more guarded speech and practice of Pentecostal leaders, as well.

"Manito is the god of Abraham!"

Assistant Pastor Emile Houle said this as the climax of a short praising session, which he led in the Faith in God's Temple church, in Trout Lake, one night. Emile's utterance crystallizes the contradictions and continuities in Cree Pentecostal God-talk. Emile mixes codes both on a formal level (including elements of English and Cree), and also on a thematic level. With such a statement of faith, the speaker is positioned both in the Cree lifeworld, and in the Judeo-Christian tradition, while simultaneously destabilizing the prior assumptions and historicity of each. This is consistent with Emile's broader worldview: as he told me on our first meeting, he could trace from the Bible the descent of the Cree from Adam through the dispersal of Israel. At the same time, he informed me, he was well-versed in his own culture by virtue of having been raised (as a Catholic) by his grandparents. Indeed, his grandmother taught him both Cree syllabics (through bible reading) and the stories of Wesakecak. When an elder taught in the old way, Emile told me, "it was just like church," as people gathered around to listen. Such recollections underline the incorporation of literacy and Christianity into traditional oral systems of teaching and learning during the twentieth century. The intellectual genealogy of many leaders involves similar experiences.

Seen through the lens of Christianized discourse, views on the past are ambivalent, ranging from the belief that an evil force was on the land prior to Christianity (Darnell 1974:320) to the idea that Indians believed in God prior to the arrival of the missionary (*ibid*:329). I can confirm having heard both these views expressed, sometimes by the same person on different occasions.

There is no monolithic Cree understanding of the past, or of anything else. Indeed, notwithstanding Emile's statements about the biblical origin of the Cree, in general the question of Cree Christianity's historicity or indigeneity seemed to be of greater interest to me than to my Cree Christian collaborators. Nevertheless many Pentecostals stated that traditional practices, while not acceptable for contemporary Christians, had not always been opposed by God. Indeed, multiple consultants agreed that there were positive and/or holy aspects of the earlier tradition.

Emile suggested that when they first encountered missionaries, the Cree had been predisposed to belief in a benevolent God since they were already in contact with the Holy Spirit. For Emile, this "white spirit" co-existed during the pre-contact period with a "black spirit." Both spirits could be called upon to "cure," but only the white spirit had the power to "*heal* (my italics) the whole person." Emile's opposition of the white and black spirits suggests both Christian dualism, but also the Cree ideas *kisemanito* (merciful spirit) and *macimanito* (evil spirit).[97]

When the missionaries came, according to Emile, and the gospel was spread, the need for a "white spirit" to mediate, between the pagan Cree and God, ceased to exist. Accordingly, God "put the spirit to sleep." So, in Emile's cosmology, the "white spirit" had aspects of both the Christian Holy Spirit and *manito*, while also being accorded a lesser status as befitted the needs of a previous era. Meanwhile, the "black spirit" continues to exist, embodying the continuity perceived by Cree Pentecostals between the negative aspects of historical "Indian tradition" and the contemporary threat of Satan and his army of demons.

In addressing these issues I should point out that I did not discuss Emile's beliefs about the white and black spirit specifically with my other collaborators. However, there is some support for this dualistic cosmology in other local sources. For example, Ghostkeeper describes *misiwe uske* ('the living world') as consisting of this world, the spirit world, and "the evil world" (1996:6). Also reinforcing the negative aspects of Emile's dualistic cosmology, in a narrative mainly concerning traditional religious practice, Loon Lake elder Maggie Mayapew stated about depression and mental illness, "I believe the spirit that is not good, this is the spirit that mixes everybody up, the spirit of darkness" (quoted in Laboucan 1995a:61). Cadotte Lake elder David D. Laboucan made a similar point, stating about traditional medicine that "half of the things were of good and half of the things were of evil" (Laboucan 1995b:4). Further suggesting the broader appeal of Emile's general cosmology, David (not a Pentecostal) stated that all Cree were descended from Adam; David then explicated a spirituality including biblical as well as traditional moorings (Laboucan 1995b:7-8;10). David's and Emile's discourses demonstrate that fitting Cree history and tradition into the broader global/biblical context of history is a matter of considerable interest for at least some local people.

---

[97] Some analysts (*e.g.*, Bousquet 2007b) refer to elders' insights that the traditional Northern Algonquian cosmology was not dualistic or oriented along the lines of good and evil. However Waugh (2001:476-8) appears to suggest a pre-Christian provenance for these terms, which for him represent aspects of the same power rather than opposing entities. Waugh's latter finding may be consistent with Bousquet's formulation.

Assistant Pastor Peter Thunder had a similar perspective to Emile on the possibility of salvation for pre-Christian Cree spiritual leaders, some of whom he regards as prophets (making the Cree religion analogous to Old Testament religion):

> CW Do you think the people who had never had a chance to hear the gospel would also go to hell?
>
> PT No.. because there's a judgment day coming. It would be according to how they lived… According to your works, it says. It started way back over here. [oh ok] Ya, but at that time, God was… There was some person here, a prophet, used to talk to these people, like Samuel, David, Solomon, Elijah, Elishah, *these* people. They talked to people that God, there's a lot of these people are, we're going to see a lot of these people back there.
>
> CW You're going to see them in heaven?
>
> PT Ya.
>
> CW What do you think about the, let's say, again, the people who were the spiritual leaders, or medicine men, if you want to call it that, of the Cree in the old days? Before they ever saw the missionaries? Do you think they're like the prophets in a way too? Do you think you're going to see them in heaven?

> PT Aaah, them… [the good ones?] Like, the good ones maybe, ya.
>
> CW But there's some who were more in line with the devil?
>
> PT Like Elijah, when he started out, in his ministry [mmhmm], he killed… diviners he says… [false prophets?] ya. [oh ok] Ya, it wasn't him, but it was God. *(*slam of hand on table*)* Right down, the fire and destroy them eh?

On another occasion, Peter reaffirmed that "not everything" from tradition religion was bad, but stated that the "curse of starvation" (*i.e.,* witchcraft) had killed a lot of people in the pre-Christian era. Peter's main interest in the history of religion is in relating local tradition to what he sees as the singular event in global history: the life of Jesus Christ and his antecedents, such as the Old Testament Prophets. Even so, Peter was not willing to consign all Cree spiritual leaders to hell, suggesting that some might be equal to the biblical prophets, while others were deceivers.

William Auger put it to me more succinctly:

> CW Do you think some of them (*i.e.,* medicine men), some of those old people, they were talking to God in heaven at that time?
>
> WA Yes. I hear that story. There's some *odd* people, they believe in God.. [ok] Some of them don't; they believe somebody else. [ahh] They believe evil spirits like eh? [hmm]

William's and Peter's remarks show much ambiguity (one might even say flexibility) regarding the past, particularly in contrast to their relatively fixed belief that God will condemn those in the present who do not accept his message.

This debate is also occurring around North America in Aboriginal communities. As Native Pastor John Bush, an Evangelical from a US Reservation, stated:

> You can't mix Indian religion and Christianity. A long time ago Indian religions were all right – before Christianity, after that, there was a new way, through Christ. Now there's a better life, a better way (quoted in Balmer 2006:219).

Such discourse, while tending to discredit any suggestion that Aboriginal people's faith is necessarily "indigenized" or closer to traditionalism than it is to Christianity, exemplifies the lively debate and discussion regarding the historicity of Aboriginal tradition and of Christian revelation. Others state simply that seeking dream visions was what people did "before they knew there was a God." I take these views as honest attempts to square Christianity with local knowledge, resembling the "dispensationalist" theology of conservative Evangelicals who see God as acting through different means during different stages of history (see Balmer 2006 for a discussion of this theology).

As a counterpoint to the views offered by Pentecostal leaders, I offer the thoughts of Paul Okemow. Paul is a Peerless Lake elder who was raised by traditionalists, and was confirmed as a Catholic during late childhood. Paul is currently not affiliated with any organized religious practice in the community. Yet Paul also stated that, even for non-Pentecostals, the terms *manito* and God have a shared referent. (Paul's remarks were recorded by me in a formal interview translated by William S. Houle.):

> CW: Who did they pray to when they had the prayers?
>
> (Cree spoken)
>
> WSH: His dad, his grandfather they used to pray to manito. [oh ok] In Cree that's the same thing as saying, Jesus [right], but there was no word Jesus back then, but they still had that word manito [uh-huh], so…
>
> CW: It's a different spirit?
>
> WSH: Ya it's something…
>
> CW: It's not Jesus they're praying to?
>
> WSH: No, but it's.. they know it's up there somewhere. [huh] Like, same thing as they would, talking about Jesus they'd say manito. [hmm]

> CW: Can you ask him if it's the same concept, like same as the god they worship in church?
>
> (Cree spoken)
>
> WSH: Ya, it's the same way before even, before the word Jesus.. when they prayed they were praying to manito [the same god?] ya it's…

This discourse emphasizes simultaneously the difficulties inherent in translation, the tendency to think of spirituality in lexical or semantic terms, and also the extent to which the concept of *manito* has become interwoven in local knowledge with concepts of the Christian God, even for those who do not claim religious affiliation or interest.

Emile made use of a local master trope during our interview when he compared the burnt offerings of Cree spirituality to those of the Old Testament. Such a bringing together of symbols is picked up by leaders from all local traditions. Both Fathers Vandersteene and Hernou made similar linkages (between the wihkotowin and the Passover meal or mass). Indeed, a similarly inspired project (creating an indigenous Cree church) has been a life's work for both.

Many traditionalists (and some contemporary Catholics) seek to use these correspondences to point out the continued vitality of Cree ritual forms, and the central unity of Cree beliefs with Christianity. For instance I have seen drums used by ceremonialists, emblazoned with both the cross and the bear. Vandersteene also associated the bear with the crucifixion. Bears are accorded a special status in Cree discourse and are commonly referred to as persons. The association of the cross with the bear ties Jesus into this traditional matrix of relations. On the other hand, Cree Pentecostals are more likely to posit a disjuncture between ritual practices of the past from those appropriate to the Christian present. Thus, in Emile's dialogue, Cree beliefs are equated with the religion of the Hebrew Bible, largely surpassed by Christ's revelation.

A similar view can be seen in the thought of Pastor Joe Okemow:

> CW So what was the purpose of this wihkotowin? If you don't mind talking about it?
>
> JO I guess, I don't really understand, I think the purpose was, the way they believed at that time was, that's, like us now we pray to God eh? That's the way, that's how they used that wihkotowin, to pray to God eh? Their way.
>
> CW Do you see it as being the same god?
>
> JO Ya.
>
> CW Like they call him manito, right?
>
> JO That's the same god you're talking about but they… I guess they had their own ways of worshipping and you know, they didn't know better, like, what they know that's what they did eh?

Joe's attitude toward traditional practice, at least as presented in our interview, is a tolerant disinterest ("I just went along"), mixed with appreciation of the past spirituality of his people ("but they were spiritual big time like"). This demonstrates the complexity of Pentecostal views towards traditionalism, particularly rituals undertaken by family members or fondly remembered elders.

In another case, while discussing the name of his ancestor, the "sorcerer" *Wekimaw Atchabew* (the name refers to a bow, inflected with the incense of diamond willow fungus, which Northern Cree used as incense), William Auger stated as follows:

> It's a bow that kind of stinks, like a Catholic Priest burns his paste (makes arm motion like swinging a censor). That's their religion. It's a smudge, like a sweetgrass. They blow it on themselves.. trying to heal their life, I guess.

Similarly, while discussing the burnt offering component of the wihkotowin, which his ancestors had put on near his home (at a site he now uses for tent meetings), Pastor Joe Okemow stated:

> And they cook the meat, they just chop it in pieces, and then they put in on a plate and they just go like this eh, and they prayed whatever. [They put it up in the air?] ..in the air, just like the Catholics do eh, when they had communion? Just like that.

Both Catholicism and traditionalism are seen as empty, formalistic, and potentially opening the door to demonic activity.

Spiritual warfare

Local belief in the potency of traditional religion is strong. Even many residents who are not affiliated with Evangelical/Pentecostal movements stress the frightful powers of traditional "witchcraft," while recognizing (as many Pentecostals also do) that traditional religion was not all bad. The advent of Evangelicalism and Pentecostalism has tended to diabolicize local spirits, conflating them with "global" demonic powers (DeBernardi 1999). An example of this was the uproar caused when a teacher began reading the "Harry Potter" books aloud in Trout Lake's school. Pentecostal parents were angry about the witchcraft in the book. Principal Gene Unger told me that an ethnography such as mine would be a useful resource for future educators, enabling them to understand the local religious context, to avoid crises like that of Harry Potter.

Consider the potential within local knowledge systems to link the fictional "wizards" in Harry Potter to the historical (and still remembered) Cree "sorcerers" of the early missionary period. Many Cree people told me they have experienced the attacks of opposing medicine men, who have power to cause illnesses or to place foreign objects in one's body. Those seeking healing and protection from such attacks may be a major potential source of converts for Pentecostals. Similarly, two themes (alcohol and witchcraft) also come together in many narratives of converts, who experience spirits offering them drinks or attest to the physical transformation of alcohol through spiritual power upon conversion. Conversely, God is believed to be able to remove alcohol and its effects from the system through conversion. Like the belief of some local Pentecostals in the "Suicide Spirit" this has the effect of reading a social dysfunction as a spiritual matter, very much in tune with local beliefs about spiritual power.

Invocation of "spiritual warfare" (DeBernardi 1999) has been a strategy of Evangelical/Pentecostal missionaries of the last 50 years, who attempt to trade on local beliefs in the power of "witchcraft" to build up the power of their own message. This emphasis on spiritual warfare (which symbolically empowers local spirits) is distinct from the scientific discourse of earlier missionaries (who merely saw Cree rites as ineffectual rather than evil) [see Augustin Auger, quoted in Yellowknee 1990].

Former evangelist and community leader, John A. Cardinal, made remarks, similar to Peter's, on the dangers of local tradition:

> So, that's the reason why we changed, our lives, with that, and now we don't have any problem.. to tangle up with that religion with our family, with our kids eh? They're not tangled up, like, with our old beliefs like, in the history eh? That's why it's really important, and that the person to have to find himself (inaudible word)...
>
> I don't know about white society but I know we're really, our culture is really, not too good because there's *power* in it. [right] There's really *power* and, it's working, just killing each other by dreams, and you just name it eh?

John A.'s view of Cree tradition (as of the past, and, moreover, evil) is supported by pastors and by church literature circulating between households, but is strongly contested by some more traditional elders and others in the community, including John's brother, Louie, whom I quoted earlier.

Several individuals in Trout, Peerless, and Cadotte actively "keep their culture," through participation in private or semi-private traditional ceremonies.[98] For instance, some people make burnt offerings for game, in the Cree tradition. A few of these individuals own or make intercessory articles such as drums or pipes. Local norms may be against such people, as one man told me: "If you talk about culture at a meeting, people think you're a medicine man and they have to follow you." This utterance demonstrates the fear and power many associate with spiritual practitioners, and the frustration felt by traditionalists living in a community that many define as Christian.

In spite of some hostility or disinterest, traditionalists in the communities are nurtured by their connections to ceremonial networks in other communities, where traditional beliefs are stronger. Some such individuals identify strongly with a respective teacher who is the source of their knowledge. The few active traditionalists in the communities are in touch with each other, and with others who disagree with the narrowly Pentecostal focus of public religious life in the communities. Even some local political leaders try to use their power to advance a traditional agenda: inviting elders to perform traditional ceremonies, frustrating Pentecostals' attempts to hold tent meetings on community grounds, identifying ceremonial sites through land use studies, and so forth.

Tea dances are currently regular events at Wabasca, Loon, and Little Buffalo, and one was held during the early 1990s in Cadotte. Yet it has been several decades since one was held in Trout or Peerless. Traditionalism in this form may be waning; nevertheless the continued influence of Indian Spirituality can be felt among younger people, including many who are nominally affiliated with Pentecostalism. A woman leader in Peerless told me that, every so often, someone comes to do a traditional ceremony there and people are very interested. Yet, she stated, people lack understanding of traditional ceremonies because most were raised by Evangelical/Pentecostal parents: "We don't have much culture here. We grew up in Christian homes so people never learned our culture." In spite of their perceived lack of "culture" (*cf.* Abu-Lughod 1991, Dombrowski 2001), many individuals and families have an interest in elements of traditional spiritual practice as well as newer intertribal traditions.

---

[98] One such individual told me he also enjoys listening to gospel music, and attends church occasionally to hear the music, but doesn't "believe that way." This demonstrates that occasional participation in church activities is not the same as conversion.

Many younger people who mentioned these interests to me suggested they were the only ones who felt that way, and were trying to figure it out on their own. What would happen if a local elder or outside ceremonialist were able to reach many of these seekers and bring them together in a generative fashion? I suggest that one possible result could be a rapid upheaval in local religious life, with many people consciously re-orienting their belief and practice towards (neo-?) traditionalism. A small core of elders, cultural activists, and political leaders in Peerless (and, to a lesser extent, Trout), likely reflecting the views of a somewhat larger group of local residents, appear to be cautiously promoting this agenda.

The prevalence of organized pow-wow dancing (pursued by some children and young people with the support of parents and grandparents), "cultural" trappings such as dream catchers and art, and the tone of social service programs promoted by Aboriginal healing organizations, school curriculum, and government departments, have created an environment where many people have some basic awareness of Indian Spirituality, and an interest in learning more.

Increased contact with the outside world may be promoting neo-traditionalism. For instance, one woman (a Cree teacher) learned the terminology for *kâkesimowin* (praying traditionally) not from local elders but at a conference of Cree teachers. At present, interest in local culture is strong enough to support a Métis Dance program at the Trout Lake school. In spite of some interest in pow-wow dancing among local families, there is no analogous Indian Dance group, possibly due to its perceived spiritual overtones. Nevertheless, I predict that the interest in traditionalism and neo-traditionalism will not ebb but will gain momentum as Trout and Peerless establish themselves as First Nation communities on a reserve, possibly supporting more regular official/cultural contacts with other First Nations at the provincial and national levels.

As the most long-established formal religion in the region, Catholicism has a tangled relationship with both traditional spirituality and Pentecostalism. Much as the early converts "received" (Laugrand 2002) Catholicism in terms of their prior understandings based on Cree spirituality, so some early converts to Pentecostalism retained a strong imprint of *Catholic* practice. Both Catholic (including religious) and non-Catholic consultants told me that the excesses of Catholicism "explained," or were to "blame" for, the subsequent mass conversions to Evangelical/Pentecostal Protestantism. Along these same lines, both Catholic (including religious) and non-Catholic consultants, who had studied local history, also indicated that they felt Catholicism bore a large share of the blame for weakening traditional ceremonial life prior to the 1950s. Although some Catholic missionaries, such as Vandersteene and Hernou, supported and participated in ceremonies (likely beginning in the late 1940s), this was by no means the norm. Although contemporary Catholic practice in Aboriginal communities may incorporate drumming, Aboriginal chanting, and sweetgrass, this is not the way Catholicism was generally practiced prior to the reforms of Vatican II. Accordingly, some elders find the attempts (usually by non-Native priests) to incorporate "Indian Tradition" alienating or, perhaps, ahistorical (*cf.* Siggins 2005:129-30). This reflects a long history, pre-Vatican II, of missionaries rejecting Native spirituality and Native social obligations (*cf.* Augustin Auger, quoted in R. Yellowknee 1990) as superstition.

Today, in some circles, Catholic practice is strongly influenced by Aboriginal spirituality, in spite of the fact that very few Aboriginal priests exist. For instance, during his occasional services at Trout Lake during my fieldwork, Fr. Paul Hernou led services in Cree, including many symbolic references to Cree spirituality. Linkages to Aboriginal spirituality are also seen in some (though by no means all) Catholic practices at the Lac Ste. Anne Pilgrimage. For their part, Pentecostal and Evangelical leaders have been part of a backlash against such practices, which they see as "mixing people up." Especially adherents who are "hot and cold" (*i.e.,* the majority who do not attend church regularly) are prone to being mixed up by blended practices. Catholics, Assistant Pastor Edward Noskiye told me, are among the biggest promoters of this kind of "witchcraft."

Unlike some Catholic priests, most Pentecostal preachers generally offer a rigidly anti-syncretic reading of "Indian culture," rejecting neo-traditional trappings such as "dream-catchers" and "pow-wows." As Pastor Jack Okemow stated in a sermon delivered at Potter's House church, "We never believed that way in Peerless Lake." Cree English allows for polysemy of the word "pow-wow;" was Jack referring to the semi-secular, inter-tribal, competition dance circuit, or to the wihkotowin? This ambiguity allows his utterance to be understood primarily either as a critique of an introduced (Martin-Hill 2008:59), somewhat commoditized, Indian identity, or as a critique of the local historical practice of Cree spirituality, which (in Jack's telling) withered away locally following the arrival of the gospel.

As I have shown, many contemporary Pentecostals make frequent comparisons between Catholicism and traditional Cree religion. This is because both Catholicism and Cree tradition are seen as heavily formal and ritualistic. For instance, Emile Houle stated in one sermon that "religion" and Indian tradition" go hand in hand. One sees in such remarks a distrust of what is perceived as a rigidly ceremonial approach, which transformed "the gospel" into "dead religion and cold denomination" (as Emile stated in a sermon). Perhaps this distrust is a response to the perception that Cree spirituality has been taken and mediated by an outside agency, the Catholic Church, which is now trying to revitalize what it had formerly scorned.

One might look at the other side of the coin to speculate that, for Jack and Emile to make a point of discussing "Indian Tradition" repeatedly in sermons as they do, it is reasonable to assume that these traditions must be perceived by church leaders as something that is turning people away from church. That is, "Indian Tradition" (be it the authentic local variety or the inter-tribal pow-wow) is seen as a growing movement and a threat to Pentecostalism, which must be combated.

Since the 1970s some local people, including individuals who subsequently became Pentecostals, have been prescribed a Plains Cree-oriented neo-traditionalism as a kind of detoxification therapy, in healing places such as Poundmaker's Lodge (Woodward 1990). Currently then, traditional spirituality is experienced by at least some community members primarily as a repackaged inter-tribal set of precepts and rituals. Such a version of traditional spirituality was introduced by outside agencies (Aboriginal, state, and church), promoting various personal or social healing agendas (*cf.* Niezen 1997). The proof of this repackaging of traditional culture is that the vision quest has made the transformation from local private rite to state-sanctioned rehabilitation tool taught by expert consultants to convicts. For many convict participants in such rituals, this is their first encounter with traditional religion. While some may experience such ritual as personally liberating, for others (including many Evangelicals/Pentecostals, as well as tribal traditionalists), the experience could be confusing, deeply conflicting, or irrelevant, as James Waldram (2004:289;293) demonstrates. One might question whether such a potentially divisive practice can be truly chosen freely when it is "offered" to prison inmates seeking rehabilitation strategies, raising issues of freedom in religious practice.

During my fieldwork I spoke repeatedly with one young man, "Bernie," who had done federal time in an Aboriginal-oriented prison on the Indian Reserves at Hobbema, near Edmonton. While in this facility, Bernie had undergone spiritual counseling, including a four-day vision quest in the Rocky Mountains, to give the inmates spiritual grounding. His first sighting of the mountains was a very powerful experience for Bernie, a lifelong Albertan. He fasted during this period and told me that he "heard something" during the quest, although he declined to discuss this experience in further detail. Bernie, whose family is active in the Pentecostal church and who considers himself a Christian (I occasionally saw him in church and he attempted to quit smoking while I knew him), told me he did not see his spiritual training at the prison as incompatible with Christianity. Nevertheless, it is likely that most church leaders, and many church members, would have disagreed with Bernie's participation in a vision quest.

It is interesting that, in Bernie's case, he was introduced to the vision quest not by a local elder but by a Plains Cree "Cultural Helper," under contract to the correctional system (*cf.* Waldram 1997). This reflects an ongoing phenomenon in the communities since the 1960s: "Native Spirituality" has been re-packaged by external institutions (even formerly colonizing institutions) and given back to local people symbolically through programs (targeted at foster children, young offenders, youth at risk, or the ill) designed to council, educate, or recover. Often the focus of these therapy-related "action research" projects (*e.g.,* Nielsen 1989) has been on imparting, rather than collecting, information. That is, local people are on the receiving end of "pilot projects" to help them re-orient various bodily or social practices and to provide data for authorities, to figure out why Natives do not intuitively absorb these norms. As traditional spirituality is associated with therapy against criminal behaviour and substance abuse, Cree identity is implicated in these projects. Such programs could have limited efficacy for Pentecostals who might not accept the given assumptions about Cree spirituality, right behaviour, and "culture." This is a potential public policy problem.

M.G. Stevenson demonstrates, in a passing reference to Young and Candler's previously mentioned Wabasca research on healing plants, that outsiders often rhetorically side with traditionalists against Pentecostals (see also Martin-Hill 2008:150), in pronouncing the correct version of local culture, as the concerns of Pentecostals are dismissed:

> In brief, a healthy northern Aboriginal community must be based on traditional values, knowledge and structures if it is to have a sense of identity which will enable it to survive in a modern world (Stevenson 1999:25).

In the context of competing "factions" (*ibid*) of different religious groups, what does this proposed return to tradition mean for religious freedom and choice?

As Waldram writes:

> The reification and reinvention of Aboriginal 'culture' as a treatment modality has been a fascinating process, and one in which an unconscious essentialist, and even primitivist, agenda appears to have been at work, even where Aboriginal people themselves have been actively involved in the process (2004:286).

Waldram further observes that the concerns expressed by many Aboriginal people, about the power of traditional healers to also cause harm (*cf.* Ahenekew 2000), have tended to be swept under the rug by researchers and service providers promoting cultural traditions as therapy. Such essentializing programs and discourses risk introducing an intertribal Indian Spirituality in the guise of traditional values (*e.g.,* Young *et al* 1989), carrying the stamp of what Lisa Philips Valentine calls: "the folklorization of identity" (1995:163). What "factions" should the researchers side with? Who, finally, has the right to be healed? Perhaps researchers and policy-makers should consider staying out of these internal debates, rather than writing pseudo-scientific prescriptions favouring one side in an internal dispute over culture and personal choice.

As the majority of Trout Lake's population, local Pentecostals respond in a somewhat bemused manner to such public attempts to represent Cree spirituality as a dominant or ascendant tradition in the community. As one example, a sign at the Trout Lake Health Centre urged people to consider becoming prospective foster parents in a Native-oriented program, using the term "the Creator." In response, someone simply wrote the word "God" above "Creator," without further defacing the sign or crossing out any original words. The sign remained in the foyer, without further alterations, for a period of at least 10 years (judging by the '403' area code on it). Perhaps this written discourse can be said to represent an uneasy local consensus tending equally towards both an exclusive and a multivocalic view of God and religious practice.

Figure 22: Gifts from the Creator

Chapter Five: Translating Conversions

In the previous chapters, I have provided background on study sites and methods, relevant elements of discourse, history of local mission fields, and the contemporary state of (neo-) traditional Cree spiritual practice. In this chapter, I will bring these threads together to closely examine the phenomena of religious conversion and adherence. Picking up on themes and writers I touched on in Chapter One, I will begin this chapter with a discussion of recent ethnographic perspectives on Christian conversion. Then, moving forward from material I presented at the close of Chapter Three, I will use historical and statistical data to describe trends in religious affiliation and church attendance, at the national, national Aboriginal, and local levels. I consider this presentation of theoretical and statistical information as necessary to fully contextualize the more personal conversion accounts that I will develop in the last half of the chapter. My combination of collective/statistical and individual/narrative data is a means to assess conversion on a multi-scalar level through complementary methods; thus I affirm the importance of conversions in local culture, and of Aboriginal Pentecostalism as a salient research question. Considering the meanings of these statistics and stories, I close the chapter with an inquiry into the possibility for the non-converted researcher to produce ethnographic knowledge of Pentecostals' lived experiences. Questions of meaning, phenomenology, and translation become important here, as do biblical and Cree understandings of epistemology.

Numerous anthropological studies concern themselves with conversion and religious change. In a recent article on social and political dimension of religious conversion, Pierre Beaucage and Deirdre Meintel summarize a wide range of literature on this topic, mainly focusing on conversion to Christianity and Islam. As they note, "there is little consensus on how to define conversion, except for the notion of change" (2007:11). They then trace the study of conversion during the postwar period: from the modernization paradigm (which saw religion as irrational) through a "religious change" paradigm (focusing on the supposedly one-way impact of Western ideology on traditional religions) to a more sophisticated postmodern view emphasizing "individual trajectories and the subjective transformation that the act of conversion may entail" (*ibid*:12). This shift to subjectivity opens the door to studying re-conversion, change of denomination after an initial conversion, and loss and regaining of religion by the former convert, as well as the generally processual nature of conversion, which is linked to sociality and may be quite gradual (Dombrowski 2001:133). Such a focus on individual trajectories is very attractive to me, as it allows the close study of phenomena too fine-grained (as I show in this chapter) to be studied effectively using only macro-structural methods and theories. Moreover the emphasis, to which I am inclined, on the individual "*bricolage*" (Beaucage and Meintel 2007:13) in conversion reflects a broader trend within anthropology to focus on individual choices and life courses (*e.g.,* Ferrara 2004:29-30). Through attentiveness to life story and narrative, I follow this trend in many respects.

How does one speak ethically of conversion, to allow for consideration of individual agency and religious choice while recognizing structural/colonial forces? Turning the model of modernization on its ear, Marshall Sahlins suggests that colonized peoples have instead "indigenized" modernity (1999:8), and that many practices and technologies appearing on their surface as western have been adopted and used in relation to indigenous structures of meaning. The example Sahlins gives that best suits my purpose is that of Inuit using airplanes to hunt and to maintain traditional visiting relationships. His model has the capability of encompassing the formulations of A. Irving Hallowell, Adrian Tanner, and Jean-Guy Goulet, each of whom puts forward a view of Aboriginal spirituality as being generally more important than (or even as animating) the practice of Christianity. Sahlins' principle suggests, quite plausibly, that there are strong links between Cree shamanic spiritual contact and Pentecostal possession by the Holy Spirit, and that the affect of the latter draws much of its power from Cree people's association of it with the former. In some respects, Sahlins' formulation resembles an updating of his earlier theory on the "structure of the conjuncture" (cited in Engelke and Tomlinson 2006:12). In this model, the "structure" is the product of historical processes, the "conjuncture" being a set of relationships that gives old cultural categories new meanings.

While attractive in many respects as a theoretical platform for understanding Native Christianity in general, Sahlins' ideas are problematic when extended to Cree Pentecostalism, as they require one to reject the views of Cree Pentecostals, who stress that they are Christians participating in a global communion, and that they have much to teach others about Christianity. While I have tried in this thesis to show some of the many ways in which Cree Pentecostals participate consciously and unconsciously in Cree culture, nevertheless I find the suggestion that they converted to Pentecostalism *in order to more fully express their Cree-ness* somewhat unfounded. Thus, there are problems with the application of Sahlins' indigenization model to my data.

An opposing view to Sahlins' is exemplified by Joel Robbins, who argues for an Anthropology of Christianity, starting from the premise that people actually mean what they say when they convert to Christianity. Robbins (2001:902-3) writes that the idea of indigenization is attractive in explaining phenomena such as spirit possession among the Urapmin (Papua New Guinea). Overall, however, the indigenization of modernity thesis leads only to a partial understanding, and may ultimately distort both the indigenous tradition and modernity itself. Firstly, as Robbins writes, indigenous spirit possession and Christian spirit possession are not the same thing. Secondly, the "indigenization of modernity" suggests that "modernity" is an empty vessel, or a set of institutions and technologies. In reality, as Robbins states, modernity itself is a culture with a set of ideas about humans and their entitlements, as well as corresponding assumptions about the nature of the speaking subject and the power of language (*cf.* Bauman and Briggs 2003, Cannell 2006:15; 2005, Keane 2007). The practices flowing from these Christian Modern assumptions can be studied as local Christianities, as I attempt in this thesis.

We should, according to Robbins, look for and document these local modernities; however, they should not be viewed as solely manifestations of hidden local traditions predating Christianity. Promoting a similar view is Birgit Meyer (1999), who attempts to transcend what she views as the research dichotomy between traditional and Christian groups. Meyer looks not just at suppression and alienation of traditional belief, but also at local appropriation of Christianity, by studying a broad spectrum of grassroots practices: "The 'real story', which should form the main focus of anthropological investigation, she writes, is the concealed and mysterious manner in which local

Christianity evolves" (Meyer 1999:xix). Meyer here resembles Robbins' call for studies into the mechanics of the spread of Pentecostalism.

As I mentioned in Chapter One, Richard Preston offers an early example of a potential resolution to the subsequent debate about indigenization and its terminology, which I have been discussing. Using modernization theory as a foil to symbolic anthropology, Preston suggests that Pentecostalism may have been successful because it allows adherents to simultaneously meet both Cree *and* Euro-Canadian standards of competence and self-control, while also allowing loss of self-control in ritual moments, away from white control and observation (Preston 1975a:122-123). This model appears to fit the data I have collected.

Also transcending the indigenization debate to some extent, Fréderic Laugrand (2002) offers a theory of conversion which is both ethical and credible, and which provides a modification of Beaucage and Meintel's actor-centered view, in a Canadian Aboriginal context. In his complex discussion of Inuit conversion to Christianity (a historical account not touching on Pentecostalism directly), Laugrand rejects the view that Inuit converted to get out of a religion of fear. Such a view, he states, cheapens and essentializes both Christianity and Inuit culture. Recognizing that religion has structural elements, Laugrand nevertheless calls for a more interpretive approach to its study including the study of converging "zones of contact" in which awareness and exposure to Christianity may be differentially greater or lesser, leading to varied degrees and kinds of conversions.[99]

---

[99] Laugrand's model here provides scope for consideration of the work of Aboriginal missionaries and go-betweens, the importance of which I have documented in my discussion of Trout Lake from the 1890s to 1960s. For instance, understanding the post-WWII situation in Trout Lake required, in Chapter Three,

In a semiotic and processual reading, Laugrand (2002:17-8) lays out his major theoretical innovation. He suggests that conversion resembles the "reception" of a message, which requires both a sender and a receiver; however, people would only receive elements of the message that could be rendered meaningful in their own cultures.

Reception is a structured, interpretive process, which does not exclude the possibility of a distortion of the message occurring at either pole. Significantly, for Laugrand, communication is not limited to decoding but is fundamentally transformative. Moreover, the transformation that is conversion is an open process and a rational act, the Inuit understanding of which implies a willful turning toward. On a cultural level, this turning toward continues as a process, for years or generations after the original dialogue or conversion. Finally (Laugrand 2002:19-20), we must recognize key similarities between Inuit and Christian beliefs, which are negotiated over time. Thus, subsequent Christian practice in an Aboriginal community could be characterized either as a rupture (displacement of the old) or a creation (of a new within the old). Whether one chooses to emphasize either aspect may vary by context. I find Laugrand's reception theory very useful for my purposes. His reading powerfully reflects debates, symbols, and processes ongoing within the communities I am studying.

A statistical contribution to understanding conversion

Conversion is a phenomenon, which can be studied at multiple scales: individual and social. The main focus of my thesis is on the individual and the small-scale community; however it is appropriate to consider collective, rather than individual, scales of conversion, and to critically use such statistics as are available. To understand

---

extensive consideration of neighbouring communities such as Peace River, Slave, Wabasca, Little Buffalo, Loon, and Peerless lakes, as progressive zones of contact.

demographic issues around these large-scale conversions, some comparative analysis of quantitative data is beneficial. Although I did not conduct survey research, federal censuses, as well as other sources, provide supporting data for my study.

Prior to analysis of local data, it is useful to discuss national and provincial figures through time. The Canadian population overall experienced steady postwar growth in Pentecostal affiliation, which increased from .5% in 1941 to 1.4% in 1981 (Noll 1992:471). It appears that the proportion (not the absolute number) of Pentecostal adherents nationally has flagged somewhat since 1981. A similar trend may be observed at the local level around Trout Lake, with early growth among Pentecostal adherents apparently slowing since the 1990s.

Nationally, during the postwar period, the Catholic, Anglican, and Pentecostal denominations have each been better represented among Aboriginal people than among the general population (Mol 1985:59). In 1951, just before Evangelical missionizing began in the isolated communities, close to 80% of Alberta Indians were Roman Catholic (Mol 1985:59). This 80% figure is roughly consistent with priests' reports from mid-century in the Trout Lake area, as well: in the best available estimate (from 1939) Fr. Bruckert reported the population of the Trout Lake district was over 80% Catholic, although only half of the couples were married as Catholics (Bruckert 1939:1), suggesting some weakness in Catholic domination of the local religious scene.

Nationally, somewhat later, the 1971 census recorded that, of Canada's 313,000 Indians and Inuit,[100] "Other Religions" and "No Religion" accounted for 9000 each.[101] Catholicism claimed 174,000, Anglicanism 69,000, United Church 32,000, and

---

[100] This figure did not include all Aboriginal people, for instance excluding most of those in Trout and Peerless (who would have been considered as Métis or Nonstatus Indian at that time).

[101] "Aboriginal Spirituality" was not a given choice

Pentecostalism 6000 (or approximately 2%). The true number of Pentecostals is hard to capture, but had been rising fast both prior to and subsequent to 1971 (Grant 1984:242). Certainly by 1971, the proportion of Pentecostals in Canada's Aboriginal population was substantially greater than that in the general population.

In the 1981 census, Pentecostal representation increased to 3.3% among Indians and Inuit as compared to 1.4% of the general national population. Those Indians and Inuit claiming "No Religion" or "Other Religion" had increased to 6% each (as compared to 7.3% and 9.1% of the national population, respectively). Anglicanism and Catholicism declined slightly among Aboriginal people, while the United and Presbyterian churches appeared to suffer a greater loss of adherents. Naturally, it does not follow from a census statement that the individual in question regularly attends church. Among Pentecostals (of all ethnicities) nationally in 1981, 37% reported attending church regularly, a high rate for a Protestant denomination, but still a minority of total Pentecostal affiliates (Noll 1992:471).

By 2001, the census reported that over 19,000 Indians (3.4% of Registered Indians nationally) were Pentecostal, compared to a mere 1.24% of the general national population. An additional 35,000 people, with some Aboriginal background, also claimed to be Pentecostal (Burkinshaw 2006). It is interesting to note (as I suggested for the isolated communities in Chapter Three) that the growth rate of Pentecostalism in Aboriginal communities nationally seems to have slowed somewhat or stabilized, even reversing in some places, as compared to rapid growth earlier in the postwar period. Even so, the 1981-2001 period of slight growth in Aboriginal Pentecostal adherence actually compares quite favourably to mainstream Pentecostalism. Nationally, the proportion of Pentecostal adherents in the general population appears to have shrunk over the same period. As I mentioned previously, Robert Burkinshaw has collected data from British Columbia, suggesting that Aboriginal Pentecostalism may have peaked in terms of its share of the total Aboriginal population in that province, if not entered an absolute decline in membership. This could presage a national trend of relative (or even real) decline in the number of Aboriginal Pentecostal adherents as well. Even so, this religion continues to be better represented among Aboriginal Canadians than among non-Aboriginals.

Overall, the rapid growth in Pentecostal affiliation among Aboriginal people nationally since the 1950s certainly suggests that this movement is worthy of analysis. More localized data suggest that within these national statistics lurk great variations between and within communities. As a result, the significance of Pentecostalism in some communities (such as Trout Lake, with over 50% Pentecostal adherence[102]) is greater than in others, as I shall show. It appears from available secondary ethnographic and church history accounts that Pentecostalism has been generally most prevalent in the arctic and subarctic.

I will now conduct a critical analysis of available statistical data for Pentecostal adherence in the isolated communities, which also could profitably be attempted elsewhere by others to chart fluxes and flows in this religion on a national level. With assistance from Chuck Humphrey, of the U of A Libraries' Data Library, I was able to access 2001 census data for the Dissemination Areas (the smallest census district for which data are available) representing Trout and Peerless, and also for the Municipal

---

[102] The Cree communities in northern Quebec are also approximately 50% Pentecostal (Prince, quoted in Ferrara 2004:16).

District (MD) of Opportunity as a whole. I also examined a comparative community outside the MD, and outside of the isolated communities region: John D'Or Prairie. The latter is a Cree community (residing on one of the Indian Reserves of the Little Red River Cree Nation), approximating the combined population of these communities.

There are some problems with the use of census data, which should be recognized out front. For one thing, detailed data on other comparative communities were not publicly available (Personal Communication: Chuck Humphrey 2007; see also Bailey 2008). Also, many questions (including the salient data on languages and religion) are only asked of 20% of respondents, making the use of these data somewhat problematic. Another potential skewer is the means of asking: were questions asked in English or Cree; orally or on paper; with or without prompting and answering on others' behalf? As well, given the formulation of Cree spirituality as "not a religion," what is the meaning and relationship of the choices, "No Religion" and "Aboriginal Spirituality?" Questions about religion may also be heard as, "what church is in your community?" Combined with the impact of projection up from 20% of a small community, each of the above factors may also create potential distortions. Finally, let me note a major anomaly: in attending dozens of services at Peerless and Trout, I never got any indication (either from attending church and counting others present, or from talking to churchgoers) that 30 to 50 per cent, respectively, of local inhabitants were regular church attendees. So what is the meaning to individuals of their own and others' stated adherence? All these questions make the use of statistical data imprecise, even unuseful. Yet provided it as used as the basis of a question, using census data allows for identification of religious preferences on a macro level. Comparing across communities, the results are instructive.

Table One: Religious Affiliation in Selected Communities[103]

	Trout Lake	Peerless Lake	Opportunity (includes Trout/ Peerless)	John D'Or Prairie
Total Rounded Population	310	400	3435	850
Aboriginal Population	300 (97%)	400 (100%)	2750 (80%)	835 (98%)
No Religion	70 (23%)	250 (63%)	805 (23%)	10 (1%)
"Roman Catholic"	60 (19%)	10 (3%)	1400 (41%)	820 (96%)
"Anglican"	0	0	190 (6%)	0
"Christian Missionary Alliance"	0	15 (4%)	65 (2%)	0
"Pentecostal"	155 (50%)	130 (33%)	515 (15%)	0
"Christian"	15 (5%)	0	185 (5%)	0
"Protestant"	10 (3%)	0	60 (2%)	0
Other Protestant[104]	0	0	130 (4%)	0
Other Christian[105]	0	0	70 (2%)	0
"Aboriginal Spirituality"	0	0	10 (0.3%)	10 (1%)
Other Religion (*i.e.*, Muslim)	0	0	10 (0.3%)	0

---

[103] From Canada 2001 (data accessed by Chuck Humphrey and edited by Clint Westman); totals may not add up due to rounding and projections.

[104] Includes United Church, Baptist, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Salvation Army, and Evangelical Missionary Church.

[105] Includes Mormon, Jehovah's Witness, Adventist, Ukrainian Catholic, and Greek Orthodox.

The Canada 2001 data in Table One suggest that Trout Lake could be 55% Pentecostal, if the much smaller categories of "Christian" and "Protestant" are assigned to "Pentecostal". Meanwhile the most closely related community, Peerless Lake, has a solid majority of people claiming "No Religion" (although Pentecostalism still claims 1/3 of the local population). [106] What are the factors in Peerless Lake that result in adherents of Pentecostalism and "No Religion" each being far in excess both of the national Aboriginal population and the general national population? Furthermore, what are the different factors separating Trout and Peerless, which share a similar history except that Evangelical missionaries arrived first in Peerless? Does the recent presence of a part-time resident priest explain the existence of a respectably-sized Catholic remnant in Trout, versus the near-total absence of census Catholics in Peerless? While this may relate to differences in income (Chapter One), such an analysis would require consideration of communities such as John D'Or Prairie and Little Buffalo Lake. What is the relationship (if any) between higher prevalence of Pentecostalism and higher prevalence of spoken Cree in Trout as opposed to Peerless, Cadotte, Wabasca, and other Cree communities, which I discussed in Chapter Two? The answers to these questions are: contingency, conjuncture, life history, social relations, individual charisma, family linkages, and personal choice. A deterministic approach to explaining conversion is not fine-tuned enough, given the similarities in history and culture between the two communities.

---

[106] Data available on the internet (which is not as fine-tuned as the dissemination area data generated by Chuck Humphrey) suggest that at least 50% of the population of BCN's Indian Reserves at Wabasca consider themselves Catholics, with "Protestants" (likely including a significant number of Anglicans, as well as Pentecostals) and "Christians" together claiming less than 1/3 of the population. Other similar data suggest that the population of the Woodland Cree First Nation's Indian Reserves around Cadotte Lake (not in Opportunity) is also nearly 50% Catholic (in spite of a very limited Catholic pastoral presence over the last 15 or more years). The second largest group at Cadotte claims no religion, with "Protestants" and "Christians" together making up only 25% of the population. Given the negligible missionary presence of Anglicans and other Protestant denominations around Cadotte over the last several decades, it appears that many "Protestants" at Cadotte would be affiliated to some extent with Evangelical/Pentecostal networks. All these data suggest the regional uniqueness of Trout (and even, to a lesser extent, Peerless) in having a high proportion of Pentecostal adherents relative to other local communities (All data: Statistics Canada. 2001. Community Profiles. http://www12.statcan.ca/english/profil01/CP01 /Index.cfm?Lang=E. Accessed January 30, 2008.). Even so, note that each northern Alberta community mentioned in this chapter (except John D'Or Prairie) has a high proportion of Pentecostals, relative to the national average.

Turning to the regional data represented by the MD of Opportunity, we see some context for the number of Pentecostals in Trout/Peerless, but also further evidence of their exceptionalism. Opportunity is approximately 80% Aboriginal (even excluding the Loon River and Bigstone First Nations' Indian Reserves, which are located within Opportunity boundaries but are not shown in Opportunity data). While over 20% of Opportunity's respondents claim to be "Pentecostal," "Christian," or (to a much lesser extent) adherents of other Evangelical denominations, this figure is deceptive.[107] On closer inspection, it is revealed that over 40% of the Pentecostals/Christians within Opportunity reside in Trout and Peerless. Stripping Trout and Peerless data out of Opportunity results in the total percentage of Pentecostals/Christians in of Opportunity declining to less than 15%. On the BCN reserves around Wabasca, less than one third of inhabitants identify as Pentecostal (see footnote 106). This is interesting as Wabasca-Desmarais (the largest community in Opportunity), with the surrounding Bigstone reserves, was the departure point of many Pentecostal missionaries coming to Peerless and Trout during the 1960s. So it appears that the message has taken better hold in the target communities (Trout/Peerless) than in the sending community (Wabasca).

While Opportunity's percentage of "Pentecostal" respondents is still greater than that of the national Aboriginal and general national populations, it does not compare favourably to the 1/2+ seen in Trout Lake, the 1/3 seen in Peerless, or even the lower number suggested by available data from BCN and Woodland Cree reserves (see footnote 106). Intriguingly, a similar effect can be seen with respect to the "No Religion" numbers, wherein Peerless and (to a lesser extent) Trout raise and distort the percentage claiming "No Religion" for Opportunity as a whole, just as they do for Pentecostalism.

---

[107] Nevertheless, Pentecostals in the Municipal District of Opportunity are a nationally significant constituency for that religion, with this sparsely populated region representing approximately 1% of Aboriginal Pentecostals identified in the census nationally. This percentage could rise further if residents of Loon River and BCN Indian Reserves were included in the regional total for Opportunity.

Yet another interesting feature of the Opportunity data is the relatively high number of Roman Catholic respondents, at over 40%. This percentage approaches the 50%+ levels seen on the Bigstone and Woodland Cree reserves (see footnote 106), as well as in both the national Aboriginal population and the national general population. This may demonstrate the long tenure and continued presence of Roman Catholic institutions around Wabasca. Yet Trout also had resident clergy and a Catholic-influenced school for decades, with contrastingly lower participation in embittering residential schools, than was the case at Wabasca. So what explains the decline in Catholics at Trout, relative to the rest of Opportunity?

On a smaller scale, a similar situation prevails with respect to Opportunity's Anglican respondents. Anglicans represent approximately 5.5% of Opportunity's population; with Trout and Peerless data stripped out, this rises to 7%.[108] This may reflect the long history of Anglicans in the region, and the continued presence of an Anglican parish at Wabasca. It is interesting that in Trout and Peerless, where Anglican missionaries never resided, the figure for Anglican adherents is zero. It appears that national Protestant denominations, such as the Anglicans and the CMA, have had major difficulties maintaining devotees in these communities without an ongoing denominational presence. Only a small number of people at Peerless Lake, and elsewhere in Opportunity, identify with the CMA, for example.

---

[108] It is likely that a substantial portion (20% or more) of Opportunity's Anglican respondents are Non-Aboriginal. It also appears likely that nearly all respondents claiming "Other Christian," "Other Protestant" or "Other Religion" are non-Aboriginal.

According to Canada 2001, Opportunity (with an 80% Aboriginal population) is home to as many Muslims as self-identified practitioners of "Aboriginal Spirituality." In no community I analyzed did a statistically significant group appear in the 2001 census to be adherents of Aboriginal Spirituality.[109] Yet my wihkotowin fieldwork and other data show that Aboriginal spiritual traditions are practiced by many Opportunity/Bigstone/Loon River area residents. How do such people define themselves? I ask this question to problematize somewhat the use of census data.

Still more problematic data is presented in the John D'Or Prairie figures. John D'Or is directly comparable to Trout/Peerless in some respects, including some of the same actors among both missionaries (Fathers Hernou and Vandersteene) and Aboriginal people (who share family relations and territory). The Little Red River Cree Nation (LRRCN) communities also experienced social and economic upheaval in the 1960s, appearing in provincial headlines as did Trout. In other respects, as a reserve community composed almost entirely of Treaty Indians, its history has been distinct from that of Trout/Peerless. Overall, I would suggest that any such ethnostatus-oriented differences should pale as determinant factors in comparison to the enforced commonality brought about by the generalized exclusion of northern Aboriginal people from public life in Alberta throughout the 20th century.

---

[109] Census data suggest that fewer than 1% of BCN Indian Reserve residents at Wabasca claim Aboriginal Spirituality ("Other Religion") as their religion (Statistics Canada. 2001 Community Profiles. http://www12.statcan.ca/english/profil01/CP01/Index.cfm?Lang=E. Accessed January 30, 2008.).

Of all communities I analyze, John D'Or reports both the largest percentage of Catholics (over 90%) and also of those claiming "Aboriginal Religion" (over 1%). John D'Or also presents the smallest percentage claiming No Religion (under 2%). While the 'zero' for Pentecostalism in John D'Or is a statistical fiction (I have personally met Pentecostals from John D'Or, who came to church in Trout to hear testimony of "wise elders"), certainly their support pales in comparison to that of the Catholics. Fr. Paul conflated Catholicism and Cree Spirituality, informing me that people in John D'Or and other LRRCN communities would never give up their traditional religion to practice Pentecostalism because "they're too strong Catholics." Many other respondents in Trout and Peerless also stated that John D'Or was a hotbed of traditional ceremonialism; this suggests that Catholicism and Cree spirituality have found a means of co-existing there (although the data also suggest that at least several dozen people residing there would consider themselves more as adherents of Aboriginal Spirituality than of Catholicism). Additionally, available evidence suggests that ceremonies such as the Shaking Tent are still practiced in the LRRCN communities, as are rites to maintain relations with animals. Such practices in Trout and Peerless are largely absent, to my knowledge. As a final note, I learned in 2008 that Emile Houle and others are currently preaching regularly in John D'Or, and finding a positive reception from some people, due to Emile's openness towards some elements of Indian tradition. This example emphasizes the importance of individual actors, on a changing terrain, to understanding conversion.

Personal accounts of conversion

The work of Clifford Geertz, on relations between different religious streams in Java (1960), and Moroccan and Indonesian adaptations of Islam (1968), provides a classic perspective on the interactive, lived, terrain of religious conversion and reception, proving that theoretically supple writings can age well. In this view, the role of the ethnographer is to look beyond numbers, for contingent human behaviour. Here, we step away from laws and statistics towards guesses and stories: By foregrounding western analytical concepts, and neglecting lived experience and native points of view, we analysts risk "mistranslating" Pentecostalism (Brodwin 2003:86). Contingencies (such as the differences between religious affiliation in Trout Lake and John D'Or Prairie) can only be explored ethnographically, with attention to local meaning. As is suggested by my invocation of Geertz, I will now move away from charts and numbers to undertake a fuller interpretive analysis of individual conversions.

Peter Thunder and I had been traveling on oil roads and cutlines all day, on the trapline he shared with John P. Cardinal, north of the Wabasca River. We were checking traps and snares, collecting harvested animals, and re-baiting sprung traps with fish, the smell of which filled the vehicle. Such trips provided me an opportunity to question Peter both about subsistence practices and about Christianity, two areas in which he is very knowledgeable. My travels with Peter in this remote area made me glad to have traded my Honda Civic for a four-wheel drive vehicle, which made me something more than a peripheral observer on Peter's trips since his main mode of transport was an old minivan. The landscape in winter was thrilling. Peter's practiced eye could identify animal tracks in the half-light, even from a moving vehicle.

On one occasion Peter demonstrated his bush knowledge by improvising with a jack, a chainsaw, and some logs he cut on the spot, to "unstuck" the vehicle. One of my tires had gone through soft ice, while crossing over a hidden, spring-fed brook or wetland that had thawed the ground beneath the snow on the cutline. This tire was stuck in a muddy layer, below the ice it had been traveling on. Peter went to work immediately cutting boughs, as I stood by uncertainly before being able to help. Following Peter's plan, we progressively jacked the vehicle up to place more and more logs, branches, and boughs beneath the bottomed-out tire. Though cold and wet, we were on our way within 90 minutes. Peter, always positive, explained that he had had to do that trick before, but that it was much worse in the summer with the mosquitoes and the mud. I often think about what my course of action (and frame of mind) would have been at that moment, trapped in the bush in winter without a cell phone signal, had I not been traveling with an experienced bushman.

Figure 23: On the Trapline

We took several trips like this. On one of them we stopped to make a fire for lunch, and Peter told me about how he had once prayed for healing for his mother, while she was in hospital in Edmonton, and she was been inexplicably released days later. As was sometimes the case, he turned from a general discourse on religion into a plea for me to open my eyes to the power of God: "It's there for *you*! And it's there for me!" Later in the day, having tired of questions and momentarily misplaced a trap, Peter asked: "What about *you,* Clint? What's *your* religious background?" I responded, as respectfully as I could, that I had been brought up in church but now considered myself an atheist and a scientist. The matter was dropped until several weeks later, near the end of my fieldwork, when Peter visited us at home and was helping me with some church translations. Over tea, he said:

> You've been asking these questions to people. We've been talking about the gospel for a long time and you've learned a lot here. Now I see that you've got a life or death decision to make, Clint.

I told Peter that I respected him and his religion, that he had given me a lot to think about, and that I considered him as a friend and a valued collaborator.

Peter's characterization of conversion as "a life or death decision" by the individual is one that resonates in the discourse of most Cree Pentecostals I spoke to. Yet, as I have demonstrated in Chapter Three (and in the statistics above), conversion is also part of a socio-historical process in which communities, families, and individuals are differentially affected (obviating choice). Against this structural backdrop, however, opposing individual trajectories are plotted. Striking the right balance on the question of individual choice is the key to sensitive research. My collaborators' continued attempts to convert me have ensured that questions of agency and sensitivity were never far from my mind. I have been able to strike a balance between culture and the individual by attending respectfully to the conversion narratives many consultants shared with me. Such narratives are the source of profound insights into conversion and continuity.

The limited literature on Aboriginal Pentecostalism and Evangelicalism suggests that the promise of redemption from alcohol is a major part of these religions' appeal (Dombrowski 2001:164, Garrity 2000:531, Preston 1975a:122, Tanner 1979:211, Waugh 1996:157). Missionary Ruth Jaycox takes this a step further, linking liberation from alcohol to liberation from witchcraft as the two main problems people are facing (quoted in Waugh 1996:153-54). This linkage between alcohol and witchcraft is borne out in the life history narratives of some of my collaborators.

As William Auger stated (in a segue from speaking about the shaking tent ceremony, which an acquaintance of his had witnessed and described to him):

> WA You know it doesn't say in the Word of God that a horse could talk, but that's what he told me: a horse talking. [yeah, talking animals.] ya, animals talking. It's not the animals eh? It's the spirit eh? [uh huh] Evil spirit eh?
>
> That's what I've learned, as a little boy eh? And I begin to experience as I grew up, getting to be 22 years old, to be honest with you I used to hear them spirits talking to me [oh yeah?] and I know they're not from God. That's why I fight, try to fight my way to come to know the real God. [Quite powerful, those spirits?] Yeah, yeah they are.
>
> CW What kinds of messages?
>
> WA All kinds of messages.. you could do anything wrong.. Do wrong. Not to do right, that's what I learned. That's why I thank God I'm a Christian today.
>
> CW When did you decide to become a Christian? When you saw all those spirits?
>
> WA Ya, ya, ya. All these things and when I hear the Holy Spirit calling. I was an alcoholic [ah]. That's what I'd been doing, ah drinking, drinking and all that. I almost got killed how many times…
>
> You know, the one day, it was about 23-24 years ago, God touched my *life*… [24 years ago?] Ya, at a party [oh ya?] drunk… I hear this voice coming in to talk to me …[huh] I know it wasn't an evil spirit talking to me [huh huh].. in the *party*!
>
> CW And, did you get up and, leave the party?
>
> WA Ya I did. I.. God touched my *life*, outside, and, something happened. I was kind of drunk.. I sober up fast, like nothing.. no smell of alcohol at all on my clothes, no smell of smoke eh? [hmmm] That power. Now I feel the power, the real power of God. That's why, that's what changed my life.

Note in William's narrative both the presence of both "traditional" evil spirits and a spiritual transformation of alcohol through grace.

William's narrative displays a strong similarity to that of Peter Thunder:

PT Ya but I moved from Wabasca in 97 here… but a lot of things happened through my lifetime eh… I was *so* messed up with my life. [like how do you mean?] Like I used to drink lots eh? [oh ya] *Lots*… A real alcoholic eh? Then one day, one day, that happened, it changed my life eh? And, never been the same. Ten years ago.

CW How did you become, or how did you decide to become saved?

PT It's a.. oh, it was a powerful thing, because, I never knew God but he knew us all [uh huh]..what's going on. He created us so, he knew what was going on with us? This one day, it's Christmas in 94 eh? Christmas day in 94, I was... in my brother's home there. I was drinking there with him. We used to party together, *lots* eh? And my brother, this one night, it was Christmas night in 94, something happened to me there, in his home eh? It was around eleven o'clock.. before the 26th, and... and then, it *came* to me, just came to me, while I was drinking this alcohol eh, and it changed right there in front of me.. It changed the taste, the smell, everything changed right there! Even though I had some alcohol in me, but yet still somehow I tasted it, it was.. ooh boy! It was just awful, eh? [didn't taste good?] It was just awful, smell? Awful taste, I can't do it anymore, I can't drink anymore eh? So I just put it down on the table there and I said to my brother… something happened to me I can't.. I have to go to sleep… I can't drink anymore… I told him, eh? I gotta turn to God now.. it just came to me!

CW So it wasn't a, nobody.. convinced you? [No! No.] It was an internal decision?

PT It was just a.. change eh? A sudden change right there, and that alcohol, I knew something happened to it eh?

CW God reached down and, made a change to it?

PT I.. the way I put it, the way I put it ya, something happened to the drink there in my glass. I filled it right up, the glass there about that tall eh and I filled it right up.. I drink half of it, but the other half.. it tasted and it smelled [huh] aww, just awful eh? I can't, so I just, put it down there, I said…

CW What was your life like after that? Like could you quit drinking alcohol right away?

PT Ya, right there ya.. And I went to bed, that night, I went to bed around, oh say about 11. Just a little past 11… I must've slept, about four, three-four hours and my brother came in there and knocked on that door where I was sleeping and he said, he was still holdin this bottle in his hand eh and he said, come on now, let's have a party! He had this bottle there… But that thing was still on me eh? That feeling was still there.. [hmm] I didn't even.. know if I was drinking, I was just sobered right up. In three hours, probably three or four hours, it just come

> out of me, just.. there was *no* desire to drink, eh? Just.. that same thing, [hmm] it just, I can't anymore, I can't drink anymore… So I told him, aww I don't know, I can't, I don't want to drink anymore, I'm just.. I want to go to Slave Lake and rest up there and… That's what I told him, I said, I can't drink anymore.. I guess I'll never.. drink with you again, I told him eh?

Peter's and William's accounts bear marked similarities in identifying alcohol and witchcraft as key obstacles to their salvation (or, one might say, enablers of their opposite: salvation). These stories reflect prevalent discourses at play in the communities. Even the life story of an exemplar of Pentecostalism, Pastor Johnny Noskiye, reflects a triumph over the bottle, sin, and witchcraft, as many people (including his followers and family members) informed me.

The similarities in these narratives exist on the thematic, lexical, and structural levels. Both feature a strong opposition between the sacred power of God and the profane world of the bottle (as well as the world of evil spirits). Nevertheless, God is able to transcend these opposites: resacralizing Christmas in one case; even deigning to appear "in the *party*" to redeem the fallen. Both narratives feature a call to leave the party, where a change is manifested or felt. In both cases, the physical transformation of alcohol and its effects is a potent analogy for the transformation of the individual. Ultimately, the stories resemble Jesus' parable of the prodigal, who squanders his inheritance partying with friends, and is ultimately reduced to eating with pigs, before choosing to return to his father and being welcomed with a banquet. Pentecostals interpret their lives in light of such biblical narratives, which create meaning for them.

More reminiscent of Cree tradition, Peter and William also spoke in their interviews of spiritual attacks as another element in their need for redemption:

> WA I had witchcraft, I got hit with witchcraft years ago... It had been there (gestures to chest) for 13 years. [wow]… And I went to church. [in your chest?]

Ya. [hah]. Used to be a.. something come out from, my hair used to fall off... [hmm, eyebrows!] Ya. Skin, come off… [wow] and then.. when I went to church, God *touched* me (claps hands). I was standing there, when I went up like that (*i.e.*, up in the air), and I fell over. And Christian people watched over me, after church started walking to me, asking me, are you alright? They knew something happened. They're watching me: "You were standing over here, we seen you going up like that."

[you were lifted off the ground?] Ya. [whoa]

It lifted up and laid me over there. When I hit the floor, I didn't know I got healed, but in the morning, in the morning I used to feel that needle, some kind of a needle there [in your chest?] Every time I breathe it used to be, paining, for *thirteen long years*. [hmm] And that morning, I feel something under my, my shorts. [hmm] I had my clothes with me when I went to bed.. I start digging there.. Ho and I found a *needle*! [Someone hit you with that?] And a thread, a thread. [ho] That's been hitting me! [witchcraft?] Witchcraft. I asked God, hey God what's happened here? Why didn't the needle pinch me during the night? I hear a voice, "I healed you my son."

[it came out of your body?] Came out, came out. Not a sore today. Not a scar. I feel something, I hear something [hmm]. It was God!

I could have, I could have told you a lot of things but I can't, I can't stand it (sniffles). I begin to feel uh, the power of God. [hmm…]

CW Well thank you for telling me about your-

WA When I begin to think about what God did to my life, I can't stand it. And I used to be a real, real, real mean guy. I was in the *world*! I used to be, I used to be full of hatred like that (crying).

CW And now the emotion comes out eh?

WA It's gone (*i.e.,* the hatred). It's gone.

CW You seem like a nice guy now. You're a very friendly, outgoing person.

WA I'm glad, I'm glad to tell you different things than my grandfathers, their tradition.

Again, we see strong similarities in Peter Thunder's narrative, in which alcohol and witchcraft are cast as correspondences, barriers to faith:

PT Something happened to me. Something happened to me I can't, I just don't want to drink anymore, just want to get away from it. So I went to Slave Lake that morning, I left around 6 o'clock. But the next, but the 27th of December again, the next two days, was just, oh boy was just feeling, something was happening to me in my, inner part eh? Inside. In the inside, something was happening to me, and just, that 27th, around 3 o'clock in the afternoon, I was watching this tape eh? A gospel tape, that guy he's from… Whitefish eh.. Moses Laboucan? He was singing with that guitar eh just a gospel song, was just preaching God, dancing round the platform there, and something happened to me that time then, that's more powerful than before. It just come on me eh? I just started to cry eh? I knew something was happening, inside me, because I never felt like that before eh? I just started to cry there… I was alone in the house and uh, I just cried there and I just walked to my bedroom and I fall down on my knees and I said, God if you can change this life, use it.. *use* it.. I told him, I just *talked* to him and, the presence was just there it just.. I could feel that *wind* and that… and there was something happening with my life was just messed up with witchcraft and, aww boy, everything eh? It was… it was *on* me eh? And that time when I knelt down before God and cried unto him, that thing left right there… [hmm] That thing that was bothering me eh, it left.

***

CW When you said before that you were caught up in witchcraft, what do you mean by that?

PT Before, before I knew God, [uh-huh] it almost kills me, I was right there, in, *in* witchcraft, in the Spirit of Darkness.

CW Like with the, is that with the old.. Cree religion sort of thing?

PT Ya, it's something that, witchcraft is something that, these old people, it came from way back from our grandfathers eh, back from then. But that's how they used to live back then eh. Because there was no… like in Moses' time [mmhmm], they used to sacrifice animals and stuff like that, every year eh? But when Jesus came, that's done away with, no more sacrifices, no more burnt offerings, no more.

Other stories, from some older men (Peter and William are in their mid-fifties and mid-sixties, respectively, and both had attended schools in Wabasca), emphasize witchcraft and healing as having a greater role than alcohol in pushing them towards redemption. Describing the role of witchcraft in his conversion, Solomon Noskiye (a community elder and leader in his mid-seventies) provided an entertaining account of his conversion (interpreted by Peter Thunder, who laughed throughout at Solomon's wit):

> (Cree spoken)
>
> PT: Like, every year he used to have some, like a spirit of darkness, witchcraft eh? [him?] Back then [oh] when the *Christian* brothers came from Wabasca eh… [oh ok] And he used to say that, they're like, how would I say that, all teachers? He never used to believe those people eh, he used to mock them [oh ok] and one day..
>
> (Cree spoken)
>
> PT: Ya when they were coming into his house there, he told his wife, that he doesn't want them to come in where he was? [oh ok] He was lying on a bed, and he told his wife to keep them in the kitchen, not to come in.
>
> CW: And they went house to house like that? [ya]
>
> (Cree spoken)
>
> PT: And that one brother must have, said there, "Brother is your back bothering you?" from the kitchen. (laughter) (Cree spoken) And then that brother says, "We'll pray for you."
>
> (Cree spoken) (laughter)
>
> PT: They pray for him but her wife was standing on the left side and one brother on the right side and the one brother was in front and then when they prayed for him he *felt* the power of God, came upon his body.. [hmm] and that thing that used to bother him, (it) started to sleep *right there*, and then.. He never used to walk eh, he never could walk [hmm] then he started walking out with them, and they left. And ever since then, it never came back… And it *left*.. It never came back… [so he was healed right away basically?] When they finished praying for him.
>
> CW: Was his wife a Christian at that time?
>
> (Cree spoken)[110]
>
> PT: They weren't saved yet eh?
>
> CW: Hmm, and so they both got saved at that time? [ya] oh.

---

[110] Solomon clarifies with his wife, Annie

(Cree spoken)

PT: When the witchcraft hit the family, it was meant for his dad (*i.e.,* André Noskiye, a ceremonialist) eh? But, he got it. [oh and that's how he got sick?] ya. [oh]

It was meant for his dad but fell on him eh? [oh]

(Cree spoken)

PT: It used to happen at *one time* in the year.. every year.

(Cree spoken)

PT: It used to stay there for a week and then it would leave for a year. Same time every year. [like a curse] ya. [hmm]

(Cree spoken)

PT: When they got to him, he was way out cutting brush with an ax, and then when it hit him he fell down and he crawled back home.

(Cree spoken)

PT: Ah, that's it for now, he says, maybe later on he'll tell you more.

Solomon's story of his own healing foreshadows a narrative he told somewhat later, in church (having given me permission during this interview to record his church discourse in future) about his healing a grandchild; such healings through the power of faith are an important topic of local Pentecostal discourse, serving to attract converts and bolster the faith of established congregants.

Solomon's story also recalls many other discussions I had with local people who suggested that fear of witchcraft was a major factor in conversions; see for instance John A. Cardinal's remarks, quoted in Chapter Four, about people "killing each other by dreams." John A.'s line of thought on this subject is more fully developed in another excerpt from our interview:

> CW I was wondering if you could tell me any specific information about what your grandfather did, or the man that you called your grandfather? Like with their medicines and that? Is there anything that, I know some of it is secret or you might not want to talk about it but.. just to help me understand how they practiced their religion?
>
> JA …Well, some areas, as an example one area, that I could tell you why I was excited and interested, because I saw my grandfather using the medicine bag and the medicine.. back when he come out and fight with somebody, and just beat them up you know.. [physically?] Oh ya you know, they're in power.. Nobody could stand against this old guy because, just because of his medicine. And I know it's the same thing when he meets a woman and the woman don't want him. That lady will just come, coming crying,[111] you know, I've seen it. That's the reason why I got caught.

This utterance closely resembles what John A. told another outsider, journalist Rocky Woodward, over 15 years previously:

> The Indian way is our culture yes, but some of the Indian medicine use is bad. Indian medicine can be used for adultery or personal gain, so we don't use that. We would rather stick with our Bible (quoted in Woodward 1990).

As John A. suggests, prior to Christianity fear of bad medicine may have been a major factor motivating the followers of charismatic spiritual protectors and healers (Brightman 2002:94, Laboucan 1995b:4).

On a similar basis, fear of bad medicine, and desire for healing, continue to motivate people to associate themselves with spiritually powerful preachers. The motivation in fear of a malevolent spiritual power, and the consequent need for an intercessor or personal gift, suggests a structural similarity between Cree and Pentecostal dynamics in several spheres including the following: formation of religious groupings; individual experiences of spirits and curses; development or reception of personal charisma. These congruencies create potential for Cree Pentecostalisms to flourish in some contexts.

---

[111] This refers to the use of love potions, which was also described by other collaborators, including women who described the potential use of such potions on men.

Within their life stories, Peter, William, and other consultants interpret conversion as a change or a calling. Rather than an individual choice, conversion is characterized as a transformative gift. In the Maussian sense, this gift creates an obligation that cannot be discharged by the recipient, except by passing it on to others in a theological "ethics of excess" (quoting book title, Webb 1996; *cf.* Minde *et al* 1997:16-17). Yet this obviation of choice and works is not reflected in all conversion narratives I recorded; some narrators decentre the emotional experience of being born again, by putting the emphasis on rational reflection.

For instance, see the following interview with George Netowastenum (translated by William S. Houle):

> CW: Can you ask him, when did he become a Christian and why, or how?
>
> (Cree spoken)
>
> WSH: He said, he just started on his own. One day he decided to.. be a Christian and have a better life.

Whether the life story's focus is put on the gift or the decision, the convert must spend time learning – in a process resembling the acquisition of a new language or the construction of new narratives (as set out in Chapter Two) – in order to enact a new life.

Linking conversion to discourse and interpretation

Analytically, life story narratives are major potential sources of data on conversion and religious experience. Charlotte Linde refers to life stories as "a particularly important discourse unit whose use constitutes a widespread social practice that has major consequences for the individual and the group" (1993:3). Furthermore, she writes:

> Life stories are of interest both for their own sake and because they can serve as a model for a unified linguistic analysis – one that moves from the level of the

> individual construction of sentences, through the form of narratives and the social negotiation of narratives, up to the social level of belief systems and their history, and finally to their effect on the construction of narratives (*ibid*).

Through life stories, argues Linde, individuals construct a coherent narrative or plan for their life. Often life stories are based on other stories – making use of entextualization, intertextuality, generic conventions, and diglossia – for people to tell the kinds of stories accepted in the speech community. The life story constitutes a plan or map for the life. As one young man stated, during testimony, "When I open this word of God, I see my life. Kisemanito is like a mirror to me." Thus, one's life and being are aligned with God through the word.

A coherent plan for life includes a coherent plan for death, or at least a means of making death meaningful. The local discursive salience of death is reflected in the song, frequently sung in church, "Ain't No Grave Gonna to Hold My Body Down;" also in Emile Houle's statements in church, such as: "We're here to find out where we're going to go when we die;" and "I'M GOING HOME! Some day, I'm going home." Death is central to the salvationist aspect of some forms of Protestantism in particular, as it is only in death that God and person can be reunited (Cannell 2006:15). Such centrality allows for a hierarchical relation between life and afterlife, opening the door to exchanges or gifts, which will benefit one in the afterlife.

The emphasis on the exchange has implications for our understanding of the relationship of Christianity to late capitalism, through Christianity's focus on the "sacrificial economics" (Harding 2000:105) of the commodity (Cannell 2006:22). One can also see links to Cree Spirituality, which similarly promotes an idea of gifting beyond the grave. Death becomes the central event in the Christian life story as the fulcrum of an exchange. Moreover, the promises of eternal life and the resurrection of the body may allow one to look past misery and loneliness in the present. The trauma seen in the isolated communities since the 1960s, involving the sudden deaths of many people in their prime of life, has created a fertile ground for this theology to be received.

Regarding conversion, a given narrative may focus, topically, on disjuncture. Yet the narrator must also interpret events somewhat in the frame of their prior religion, as Laugrand suggests. Can one discuss a conversion event in my field sites without the use of received categories, lexemes, and narrative structures of both Christian and Cree provenance? Linde closely explores how individuals manage discontinuities in narratives, either by emphasizing the disjuncture or by focusing on the underlying similarity of different categories (1993:152). Ultimately, this discursive conundrum of how to describe disjunctures, such as conversion, which is managed daily by speakers as a tactical necessity, resembles theoretical disputes about whether Aboriginal Christianity is indigenized or whether Aboriginal Christians are part of a global Christian culture.

As vehicles for constructing or negotiating continuity and coherence in private and social life, life stories draw to mind the comments of previously cited (in Chapter Two) authors on the need for Pentecostal converts to learn a new register (Harding 2000:34, Keane 1997:47;52, Lawless 1998:33). In particular, Linde's interest in narrative coherence resembles Tanya Luhrmann's focus on the "linguistic/cognitive" aspects of belief (Luhrmann 2004:519), which come to the foreground in conversion narratives.

Peter's, William's, Solomon's, and John A.'s narratives each include lexical, "syntactic" (in Luhrmann's sense of thematic or theoretical), and narrative similarities, suggesting that they are drawing on a common body of knowledge to support their belief. Yet how is the "knowledge" aspect of this experience or process communicated? On the one hand, conversion and proselytization are predicated on the possibility of communicating states of knowledge, using resources available in the common language(s). On the other hand, the disjunctural component of conversion must raise significant questions about the degree to which this sharing of knowledge with the uninitiated can be possible.

A metaphor for interpreting the incomprehensible, translation itself provides a strong analog for discussing religious conversion, as Pastor Jack Okemow's utterance, recorded in church, suggests: "We were in darkness and somehow Jesus *translated* us into the Kingdom of Light." Jack's emphasis on translation as a parallel process to conversion has assisted me considerably in understanding the paralinguistic nature of religious experience. I will continue my discussion by noting, with Alan Segal (2003:213) that the term "translation" is itself heteroglossic. As the church utterance about being "translated" into light suggests, and as Segal demonstrates, the resemblance of translation to conversion is more than metaphorical. Rather, this resemblance also flows out of an archaic meaning of "translation:" that of a soul carried from earth to heaven. Since religious conversion is premised (in the western tradition) on textual knowledge, for Segal the plain meaning of translation (word translation) is a "prelude" to the apprehension of the term's mystical meaning (soul translation).

Like Segal's writing, the utterances of my consultants also refer in their own way to soul translation. The utterances I have presented above make use in subtle ways both of bodily metaphors and of references to biblical and other texts (including to the wind, which is a symbol of the Holy Spirit [from the Greek: *pneuma*]), to aid in understanding the experience of soul translation. Such narratives suggest an emotional and mystical experience that is not easily conveyed into words in any language, and may be best experienced and contemplated in silence. As Laugrand suggests, communicating such matters (for example, through testimony) is not merely interpretive, but may be transformational as well (Laugrand 2002:19-20). Laugrand here affirms Segal's suggestion that text translation and soul translation are closely related. Thus, meaning is understood as a process (meaning-making), which is experienced, rather than an object (understanding), which is obtained.

The remarks I have quoted in this chapter, regarding God's touching and speaking to people, suggest an embodied response to the mystic, which resists description in linguistic terms. Here we see conversion as equivalent to soul translation: a direct encounter with the divine that cannot be fully expressed in human terms. For instance, one elder described the feeling of possession by the Holy Spirit as akin to having "no bones." Another described the sensation as one of being "ok.. dancing.. alive." Remarks of this type (both of which were, incidentally, translated for my understanding by two different people) are both crystal clear and utterly inscrutable.

Anthropology of religious experiences is inherently interpretive as it plays at "the limits of meaning" (Engelke and Tomlinson 2007; quoting book title). The difficulty in expressing the exigencies of contact with the divine (that is, the relation between text translation and soul translation) resembles Harvey Cox's theory of glossolalia as primal speech (quoted in Chapter Two), as an embodied response required to express the totality of a mystical experience. Given the dualism of much Christian theology, such an embodied response to the divine raises the issue of purity and corruption (Douglas 2002). Scriptural antecedents, supporting the view that a bodily transformation must precede the ability to speak anew, include the book of Isaiah in which a seraph touches the prophet's "unclean lips" with a hot coal, thus befitting him to carry the message of God. This passage from Isaiah was quoted and elucidated on multiple occasions in the church services I attended. The touching of one's lips with a coal (the coal suggests a cleansing gift, or burnt offering, in both Hebrew and Cree traditions) is a powerful metaphor giving forth polysemic imagery of purification: both of the body (metonymy) and of speech (synecdoche). As with the polysemy between soul translation and text translation, the hot coal suggests transformation of both the person (soul translation) and the message (text translation); neither can be understood in terms of their previous frame after God has touched them. Embodied language, in this view, is at the core of a total conversion experience.

The difficulty for scholars approaching such phenomena is similar to that facing a biblical figure: the learned Pharisee, Nicodemus, in discussion with Jesus, trying to understand how an old man like himself could be born again. Jesus, characteristically, responded to Nicodemus' trick questions with a metaphor, of the wind/spirit (Greek: '*pneuma*'):

> Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.
>
> Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be? Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness. If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things? (John 3:7-8 KJV)

As Jesus reminds us, we cannot tell where the spirit comes from and where it goes. The indeterminacy of language in describing such embodied and mystical states, including the transition of the subject (soul translation) from "flesh" to "spirit," is a challenge for scholars. While Christians' words may be based on their subjective knowledge, Jesus suggests this knowledge cannot be easily communicated.

Further on the subject of humans' necessarily partial knowledge of God, we might consider the words of a former persecutor of Jewish converts to Christianity, the Apostle Paul/Saul:

> For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known. (1 Corinthians 13:9-12 KJV)

Together with the words of Jesus, quoted above, Paul's passage suggests the mystery of faith and the impossibility of coming independently (or even through conversation with Christians, whose knowledge is also imperfect) to full understanding of the religious experience.

The theme of imperfect knowledge in the Bible is further exemplified by the words of Yahweh to Job (whom Yahweh had tested and who rebuked him), in the Hebrew Bible:

> Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said, Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge? Gird up now thy loins like a man; for I will demand of thee, and answer thou me. Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding. Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? or who hath stretched the line upon it? Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? or who laid the corner stone thereof; When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy? (Job 38:1-7 KJV)

Clearly there are some things, as conceived within the Judeo-Christian religious tradition, that one cannot know. I suggest this idea has major epistemological implications for the study of the religious experience, at least as it is understood by Christians.

I have included these passages for more than just their obvious power and poetry (itself an important part of the psychic impact of religious discourse). Rather, I wish to point out some similarities between the three passages. In each, a man who had been viewed as powerful, knowledgeable, and privileged is laid low (if only symbolically, in the case of Nicodemus) by God's power, and is forced to conclude that he knows nothing. Nicodemus, a scholar of the law, is ridiculed by Jesus as a "master of Israel," who still cannot understand an earthly metaphor (let alone its heavenly referent); Saul, having been blinded (a potent metaphor in itself, among educated Greek-speakers) by God for his overzealous use of the law against Jewish Christians, concludes, following his conversion (becoming Paul) that his knowledge (even as an inventor and codifier of Christian doctrine) is like that of a child; Job, a wealthy man devoted to and much favoured by God, is unable (in God's view) to comprehend the mystery of God's arbitrary punishment of him, let alone the enormity of God's other works.

The example of Nicodemus, a scholar of the Jewish law who (it is said) later became a follower of Jesus, is particularly instructive. If such wise men could not understand the meaning of Jesus' message, without undergoing a significant transformation, we might very well ask: how could a secular anthropologist understand? As I have mentioned, I am considering myself as a secular anthropologist, since I do not consider myself (nor was I considered by the Christians I studied) as an insider.

My Pentecostal research has proved to be personally implicating and complex. I have not become Pentecostal, although I have tried to understand them on their own terms. This has not always been easy, but in some cases my outsider status may actually have eased my analysis. Edmonton Cree Pentecostal adherent, Kimberly Bellerose, provided me with feedback on my guest lecture in Dr. Michelle Daveluy's Anthropology 208 class, stating that I had addressed many relevant factual issues that an insider analyst likely would have avoided (such as the appearance of shrinking congregations).

Many recent ethnographers have suggested that it may be impossible for secular anthropologists to fully comprehend the insights and experiences of their religious subjects (Llera-Blanes 2006, Meintel 2007, Stewart *et al* 2001; Young *et al* 1989, Young and Goulet [eds.] 1994; see also Favret-Saada 1977). Having spent the last two years looking for an understanding of conversion, I am coming around to a "weak version" of this argument. Nevertheless I continue to reject the "strong version," which could only be argued from a position of strength by a formerly outside analyst who has been converted or begun to share spiritual experiences. The analyst's conversion is often desired (as in my case) by the subjects of the research; but what about the analyst's own life story of subjectivity and psychological coherence?

The need for personal coherence explains why in my church research I never approached the stage when it was open to speak; speaking during this period would have been interpreted as a testimony or as a sign that the Holy Spirit was moving in me. So, what is said in a testimony may not be so important: the act of speaking (or singing, or silence) is significant in itself. Certainly, one always has the attention of God at such times, at least according to many of my Christian collaborators and family members.

Chapter Six: Faith in God's Temple

By conducting detailed analysis of Pentecostal ritual in new cultural contexts throughout this thesis, and especially in this chapter, I hope to make a significant research contribution. As Joel Robbins writes of the global literature on Pentecostalism (2004a:126):

> Despite its widely acknowledged importance, detailed study of (Pentecostal) ritual is notably scarce in the literature. From an anthropological perspective, it represents probably the greatest lacuna in the work done thus far.

Evidence for Robbins' assertion can be seen in the North American context. Of the few social scientists that have turned their attention to Aboriginal Pentecostalism, even fewer attend to or write about ritual (but see Bousquet 2007a, Dombrowski 2001, Laugrand and Oosten 2007, Mills 1986, Preston 1985, Stuckenberger 2005, Whidden 1985). In this chapter, I make a further contribution in this area through long-term research in two related congregations. My focuses in ritual analysis are on congregational attendance patterns, the physical setting and order of services, and on verbal art. Through this inquiry I seek to understand how church ritual practice is organized and represented.

Pastors, together with lay leaders (church board members, church musicians, and community elders) and other lay people in attendance, strive together to create an atmosphere of inspired orality in the church, where any person may be called by the Lord to speak and to lead, but where silence may also be meaningful and God-given.[112] While such utterances may occur anywhere, in church they are cultivated and wished for. Through testimony, the narrative of an individual's choice (to be saved) becomes a call to the entire community to live in a more Godly manner. Such linkages between the personal and political are evident through discourse, as pastors and other church leaders may tack back and forth between personal and social commentary, for instance campaigning against dances held at the community hall. In this political theology, the worshipping congregation becomes a model for society, just as the individual turning towards God provides a model for the community to do so as well. Through verbal art, worshippers represent this relationship.

---

[112] See Bauman (1983) for an analysis of speech and silence in Quakerism, an early "charismatic movement" [7].

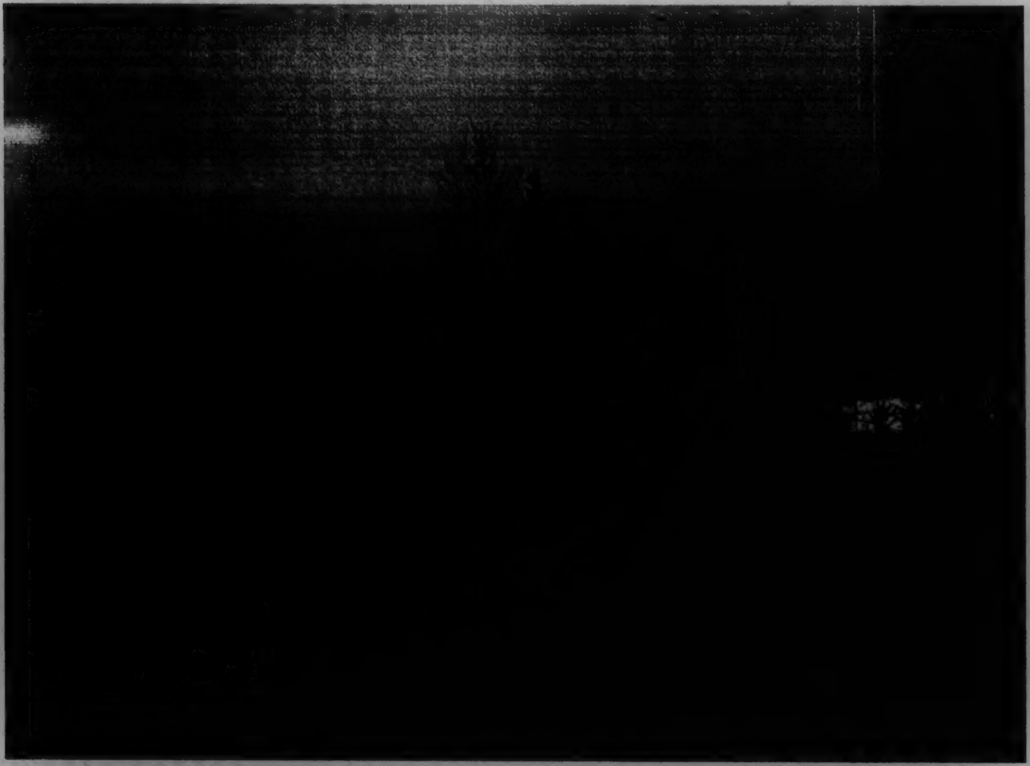


Figure 24: Jesus Loves You

The Pastorate

Faith in God's Temple, the main church where I conducted research, is located in a log building in Trout Lake; the church is led by a unilingual Cree-speaking local resident in his seventies, Johnny Noskiye, who also preaches often at Loon Lake. Johnny, the son of a noted ceremonialist and healer, is a major figure in a large extended family. He also remains active in many aspects of bush resource harvesting and distribution, apart from his ecclesiastical responsibilities. Johnny is assisted in church leadership by as many as three assistant pastors. These middle-aged men are fluently bilingual and also somewhat accomplished singers and guitarists; each has a wide repertoire of songs, verbal tropes, and scriptures committed to memory. Their discursive skills enable these men to set up and complement Johnny's fiery Cree sermons with their music and shorter sermons in Cree and English. Assistant pastors also exhort, facilitate, or direct the participation of other congregants, who may come to the stage to sing, testify, or heal. As well, assistant pastors translate when non-Cree-speaking guest pastors visit. While most participants speak mainly in Cree during testimonies, these men are careful to translate their own remarks or switch frequently between Cree and English.

Due to the multifold roles they play in church, their linkages to the communities' political leadership cadre, and their status as personal counselors to many community members, pastors play an important role in mediating between the individual and societal scales in local religious practice. This responsibility, to lead a church and to live a good life in the eyes of the community, weights heavily on pastors, who may use their lives as a source of preaching narratives.

The church's success relates at least partly to Johnny's personal charisma and character, and to the idea that God has blessed Johnny and his church. Nevertheless, the reader may find it difficult to come to know Johnny through this thesis, partially due to our lack of a shared language or a sanctioned interpreter. My relations with Johnny were fairly warm, and we exchanged pleasantries frequently as much as I was able. I also spent much time with Johnny's son, Roger, at camps and cabins in the bush where he mainly stayed. Roger was a humourous, reflective, and informative companion, and we soon became friends. I would often help Roger with various tasks relating to bush production, such as ice-fishing and hauling wood. As a sporadically employed son dwelling in his father's homes, Roger had as a primary duty to accompany and assist Johnny, performing tasks requiring strenuous physical labour or English. By helping Roger, I spent time working with Johnny too, and got to feel comfortable around him.

Johnny had been an early supporter of my research and his allowance for my presence in church was critical to the project. Johnny also allowed me to record his sermons and encouraged others to welcome my interest in their congregation. In spite of our conviviality, Johnny never granted me a formal interview, nor ever really refused one either. When Peter Thunder and I visited Johnny one night, to conduct a life story interview, he said he was too tired. Moreover, Johnny told us, his elder brother Solomon (whom I had previously interviewed) would have already provided any information of historical value about their early life in the bush. I asked if we could talk about Johnny's experiences since his salvation, but to no avail; Peter and I visited George Noskiye that night instead.

In spite of the difficulties in getting to know Johnny, I have been able to learn something of his life story through my other research in the community. For instance, I learned that Johnny has been active in many ways promoting land claims activities: he is named as a plaintiff in a lawsuit claiming Aboriginal title to the region; he was also interviewed as an elder, about Aboriginal land use and history, by the Indian Claims Commission. Johnny's example shows again that there is no necessary contradiction between Christian leadership and activist politics in support of Aboriginal rights.

Figure 25: Johnny and Roger Noskiye at their Smokehouse

All local pastors collaborated to some degree with my project, though most carefully limited disclosure of their private selves in a variety of ways. Due to the universal element of Christianity, pastors could not easily turn me away. Church, as Johnny told me, is "for everyone." As Peter similarly told me about salvation, "it's there for *you*." The central message of Christianity is that even an ivory tower intellectual (like Nicodemus) or a cosmopolitan persecutor (like Saul) can be saved.

Adherents insist that it is the saving power of anointment in the Holy Spirit, which brings the people to church. They say this power transcends one leader or congregation, that they are part of a global communion open to "any colour" (as Emile said) and that God is among them when they gather in his name. This oneness with God in the community is what people strive to feel in their worship, primarily through the means of discourse, music, and embodied sensation.

Setting

As a church name, "Faith in God's Temple" is a polysemic metaphor; the name suggests that the church building (and through a common trope, the bodies of worshippers) are linked through faith both to the temples of biblical times and to the Godhead in Heaven. While local discourse suggests that the church is the site of surprising occurrences, its outward appearance is unremarkable.[113] The churchyard is adjacent to Johnny's home, located just outside the fence surrounding his extended family's compound, across the road from the residence of the late John P. Cardinal, an important early evangelist. The church itself is a log building, approximately 20' x 40', with two outhouses amongst the trees in back and a parking lot in front. There is no sign: except for when the muddy parking lot is full, during services, one might not notice this building or recognize it as a church (*cf.* Dombrowski 2001:121).

The churches I attended appeared to be dominated by one or two extended families (or, in the case of Potter's House, one or two households) [*cf.* Dombrowski 2001:117;122]. As such, services (though occasionally advertised) appear to cater to those who are already within an in-group of worshippers. Nevertheless, regular services and larger meetings are sometimes announced on handbills, posted on the bulletin boards of stores and gas stations throughout the region.[114] Churches such as Faith in God's Temple, which generally maintain scheduled services, appear to benefit from more repeat patronage than others that do not.

---

[113] The building itself is more rustic than either church in Peerless Lake, both of which benefited from outside denominational (Potter's House uses the old CMA church) or government (Woodward 1990) capital support for the building. However, Johnny's cabin is a step up from the "Highway 986 Worship Centre," a fire hall where services were held at Cadotte Lake during 2005.

The log structure was built in the early 1970s, mainly by Johnny, his brother, and their sons. They finished the inside with drywall so that the logs are not visible. During my fieldwork the inside was decorated sparely, with white paint on most walls and simple window coverings, a little-used coffee maker on a table in one back corner. Beneath one window sits a small exposed heater, connected to the propane tank outside. Old chairs, some stacking and others with seat cushions, are neatly arranged in rows on either side of the room to allow for a central aisle extending from the front door to the altar. The area around the front door is covered with rugs or cardboard. During services the frequent CREAK of the door, followed by a blast of cold snowy (or hot dusty) air and the sound of boots stomping off snow (and/or mud), announce the arrival of newcomers.

The stage itself is slightly elevated, and is highlighted by a fringe of curtain at the ceiling, a framing not unlike a proscenium.[115] A small podium or altar is front and centre, with a microphone, guitar tuner, bible, Kleenex (for tears), and olive oil (for anointing) ready at hand. The stage is covered with an attractive carpet. The wall behind is papered with a garden scene in pastels. Also adorning the walls and front of the altar are eye-catching posters combining biblical quotes with popular art. These posters are in

---

[114] Gordon Drever and I have each collected some of these advertisements (Kent-Drever Collections).

[115] Those setting up tents for outdoor services also make an effort to distinguish and decorate the stage, and to create the central aisle opening up in front of the stage to the podium. This aisle marks the stage and the area in front of it as separate from the remaining worship space, as these are the places where anointings occur.

English; no written Cree is prominently visible in the church, in spite of its salience in other domains of church discourse (including congregants' bibles and hymnals).

The church contains over $5000 worth of musical equipment. Above and behind the stage stand large speakers on tall poles. Amplifiers, cables, and guitar cases rest all around the stage. Stage right features an electric keyboard and a digital drum kit. Stage left, three chairs rest against a sidewall, surrounded by musical books and equipment, where musicians and other performers may sit, in the public view but off the main stage. Sometimes one or more people will sit in these chairs and intermittently play guitar, while the song leader sings or plays guitar at centre stage behind the altar. Typically the bass player stands stage right, in front of the drum kit. The keyboard is rarely played.

On occasion, an elder or child will cross in front of the stage during services, to use a secondary door providing closer access to the outhouses. Children are generally allowed freedom of movement, though if a child approaches the instruments too closely, s/he may be retrieved or admonished in a stage whisper of "astam ('come here') baby."

Although one or two other small congregations were active in Trout at the time Johnny's family built his church, they have since collapsed or folded into the temple. Johnny himself gained prominence through his dramatic conversion from alcoholism and witchcraft, his powerful sermons, strong family network and status, and his own reputation as a holy man with special powers. This reputation was attested by William Auger[116] in our interview:

> What happened is, I was thinking at first, I was going to join the Alliance Church people. [uh huh] But what happened is.. when God talked to me at that party that time.. that night.. God tells me there's a little church, there's a little church in Trout Lake.. Johnny Noskiye's little cabin there.. When God talked to me there at

---

[116] William occasionally attends church in Trout, but during my fieldwork considered himself to be more affiliated with the Faith Centre in Peerless Lake. He also described Pastor Joe Okemow as "a holy man."

> that party when he touched my life, he told me, "That's where I'm going to save your life; there's a little church down there." he says.

Narratives of this type explain the rise of Pentecostalism and the decline of other faiths by means of the personal intervention of God, as manifested in a charismatic person and the call to others to make a choice about their own faith. Choices and conversions made privately and in silence are subsequently (or concurrently) performed in church as public exhortations.

Likely, Johnny's reputation as a spiritual man is at least partially related to his father, André's, activities as a healer and ceremonialist (attested to by Roger Vandersteene [Chapter Three], William Auger, Solomon Noskiye, and Peter Thunder) as recently as the late 1960s. While André used his spiritual power to rail against Pentecostalism, Johnny, Solomon, and some of their siblings have found their own reputation for spiritual power to be enhanced through Pentecostalism. In any case, Johnny's church became the focal point of Pentecostal worship in Trout (and, arguably, the region as a whole) by reaching out to other local evangelists and their families (such as the late John P. Cardinal) and by setting up a diffuse leadership structure.

The "little cabin" church has become an institution: through its affiliation with J.C. Ministries, a provincewide Aboriginal Ministry; through the creation of the office of Assistant Pastor (a practical necessity, since Johnny does not speak English or play guitar); and through the state's designation of charitable status on the church, which also required the constitution of a church board. The congregation and the board are each numerically dominated by members of Johnny's extended family.[117] Critically, however, each also includes important members who are not related to Johnny, thus helping to support the church's legitimacy as a community church. Interestingly, each member of the pastorate in Trout Lake during my fieldwork is related to Johnny by blood or marriage.

---

[117] It is also important to note that many members of Johnny's family do not attend church, and at least a few consider themselves to be spiritual traditionalists. Many other churchgoing families are similarly divided, between atheists and Christians, churchgoers and abstainers, or Catholics and Protestants.

During the period of my fieldwork, Johnny himself played a progressively diminishing role, making only a few of his trademark hour-long "hard preaching" sermons about hell, death, and sin. Although generally active and in good health, during my fieldwork he frequently came to services (if at all) only after the assistants had gotten things rolling, and usually spoke (if at all) at the evening's climax, for maximum effect. During my follow-up visits in 2007 and 2008, Johnny was spending more time preaching at Loon Lake, helping his son run a church there. Yet, even during this period of reduced activity for Johnny, his church has not been evidently shaken by any successors' squabble or by an offensive from any other area church. Indeed, Johnny's church appeared to enjoy quite cooperative relations with pastors in Peerless Lake, as well as other local evangelists.

On one Sunday at least five people from Trout Lake attended a three-hour afternoon service in Trout, and then attended a three-hour evening service in Peerless; most of these people played a major role in preaching and/or music at each service. While these services seemed very long to me, some local Pentecostals (particularly in Peerless) commented that services were now actually shorter and less frequent than they had been during the times of high revival in the past.

It appears that a core group of activists and leaders from Faith in God's Temple (including assistant pastors, Peter Thunder and Edward Noskiye) felt the call to support, with their presence, music, and words, Pastor Jack Okemow's efforts in establishing a church at Potter's House. Along with the commitment by church leaders to evangelizing outside Trout, Johnny's church also plays host frequently to individuals (including aspiring church leaders) from other communities. This is particularly true of Peerless Lake residents (there are generally at least one or two people from Peerless at any service in Trout), but also of the wider area,[118] where many churches are less well established than Johnny's. In addition, pastors from Peerless occasionally attended services in Trout, where they participated in testifying and music.

Congregational demographics

In spite of Trout Lake's small size, its high proportion of Pentecostal adherents (Canada 2001) gives it a relatively large pool of potential churchgoers. This is amplified by the apparent weakness of churches in nearby communities that have strong family linkages to Trout (such as Peerless), opening another pool of potential churchgoers from these communities to Trout. Key to ensuring sustained levels of attendance, though, has been Johnny's strategic ability to maintain his church as the only Protestant church in Trout Lake itself. Particularly in the face of an active (during 2005-6[119]) Catholic congregation (and occasionally resident priest) in the community, maintaining unity among Protestants is an important symbolic victory. This has enabled Johnny, with his ecclesiastical and political allies, to position Pentecostalism as the community's public religion in many respects.

A major strength of Johnny's network has been the presence of several credible spokespeople in a strong leadership cadre, who can present a Pentecostal message in

---

[118] I can recall seeing Aboriginal people from Red Earth Creek, Loon River, Little Buffalo, Cadotte Lake, Marten Lake, Whitefish Lake, Wabasca, John D'Or Prairie, and Saskatchewan at services in Trout.
[119] Services in 2006-8 have been seldom, due to the ill health of Father Paul.

Cree or English at various church and community functions, so that Johnny himself may stay in the background. One example of this is the weekly/occasional women's evening service held at the church, led by Johnny's sister, Helen Noskiye. Another example is the consistent presence of church members (since 2000 including Solomon Noskiye, Paul Yellowknee, William Houle, Emile Houle, and Norman Gladue) represented on political bodies such as the community association, interim council, and/or local school committee in Trout. Since the majority of political seats are generally not held by Pentecostals, ensuring effective representation by those Pentecostal politicians holding the minority of seats is of some importance for local Pentecostal electors, and of considerable strategic interest to pastors.

Although the aforementioned are important assets to any church leader, nevertheless Johnny's church has some institutional weaknesses. Firstly, attendance at Faith in God's Temple is not spectacular. William Auger downplayed the importance of "one person preaching," explaining that local people worship collaboratively, by coming together to talk and make music. As such, many people at any service play a key role in music and preaching. Indeed, more people are sometimes on the stage than off. Ironically, this appears to be in contrast with the promise of a church "for everyone," not just for religious specialists. One young man acknowledged this when he told a small gathering at Potter's House:

> I've been telling this testimony all over the world. It's been a long time since I've told my testimony but no matter how often you guys hear it you'll hear it again in heaven.

How many times can one be moved by the same testimony? How can a ritual be anti-structural (as Turner, quoted in Deegan 1989, suggests it ought to be) when most participants are leaders and organizers, preachers and pickers, carrying out their standard weekly duties (some of them as a job or enterprise), and hearing the same stories? Church leaders often point out (particularly at services I attended in Peerless) that God will "bless any gathering, no matter how small;" that God is "in their midst," even when two or three "gather together in his name." Yet, even so, most congregants readily acknowledge that larger meetings are generally considered more "powerful."

Frequently I heard people, some of whom were nominal adherents but not regular attenders, say in testimony that they had not wanted to come to church, but now that they were there they felt physically restored. One such temptation that lures people away from church is watching TV; even televangelist programs are considered a temptation by some. One young man said that he had wanted to stay home and watch hockey:

> I wanted to stay home and watch those Calgary Flames win that game. The Calgary Flames are my favourite team, but Jesus is the best defensive player. No demon in Hell can get past that defensive player.

For every one who fights the temptation and comes to church, many more stay home to watch the game, or to pursue other activities. Whatever their reasons, it is clear that the vast majority of local residents do not consider church attendance to be an important part of their religious practice (if any), in spite of the emphasis that pastors place on regular attendance at church services and other ritual events.

When one takes into account that, at any given service, some of the 20-40 people generally in attendance at church are not from Trout Lake, then my informal attendance counts suggest that far fewer than one third of Trout Lake's 180+ (as identified in Canada 2001; see my discussion of this data in Chapter Five) Pentecostals are weekly churchgoers. In spite of the remarkably high proportion of nominal Pentecostals in Trout

Lake, then, we can say that ongoing church participation among self-identified Pentecostals is lower than the national average church attendance of above one third for that denomination (Noll 1992:471). This suggests that, while many locals may consider themselves Pentecostal for census purposes (perhaps by virtue of coming from a Pentecostal family) they very seldom participate in Pentecostal public ritual.

Two factors which may contribute to lower than expected attendance are the near total lack of adolescents and young adults in regular attendance at church, and the related absence of church programs for children and youth, outside of regular worship services. As I previously mentioned, younger children are frequently present in church; they are allowed to play and to come and go freely. Unlike in mainstream Protestant churches, there is generally no Sunday school, children's story, or other discourse marked as child-focused. Such lack of youth engagement could have negative long-term implications for church membership, particularly in a young community facing a population explosion.[120]

Church leaders recognize this problem, and occasionally discuss ideas such as group guitar lessons for youth, which may help young people become interested in church. Church representatives present such ideas at community meetings, seeking support of the community of the whole. In such a way, the general interest of the community in getting kids off the road is rhetorically aligned with the interest of the church in fostering a new generation of leaders, church leaders with the appropriate discursive and musical skills. In any case, if such programs were inaugurated they would compete (for young people's time) with a range of more sophisticated, funded, and well-organized undertakings such as a youth centre, ball hockey network, and Army Cadet Corps (the latter bussed children to Red Earth for drill and training during 2006).

---

[120] Today's children and youth may begin to develop an interest in Indian Culture as they age (but see Martin-Hill 2008:59). I say this because many of the nascent projects promoting "culture" in the community are aimed primarily at young people, including the following: Métis and pow-wow dancing; culture camps featuring elders and pipe ceremonies; government programs (*e.g.*, Nielsen 1989); Cree language instruction; Aboriginal Studies school curriculum. The latter features local contributions, together with information on traditional spirituality of the Bush Cree, Plains Cree, and other tribes, as well as information on pow-wow dancing.

Another group whose participation in church is somewhat less than it might be is men. Even though they are a minority within the congregation, men fill the majority of the leadership positions in church, as they do for other community institutions. Cree Pentecostals do not hold a biblically based view marginalizing women from leadership, as some other Pentecostals do (Lawless 1988). For instance, Jeannette Calahasen is a leading figure in Johnny's network, and a woman was for a time pastor of Potter's House. Practically, however, women are under-represented as leaders. As in the church Lawless documents, this exclusion of women is less evident both behind the scenes (such as on the church board), and in testimonies and participation, but is very evident among the pastorate locally. The majority of participants in services, week after week, are women. Some women join, hoping also to save their husbands or other family members. In many cases this does promote the man's involvement and conversion.

Christianity, with commands such as to "turn the other cheek," repudiates some traditional traits strongly associated with masculinity in rural Canada. Even so, Christian institutions allow for new expressions of masculinity by providing opportunities and role models for leadership both in the church and the home. In this trope men are enticed (both in the home and in the ritual space) by promises of authority, which they gain in giving up dissolute worldly activities harmful to the home and the ritual space. One woman, her husband quietly standing beside her after they had sung a tune together, testified that her marriage began to get back on track only when her husband consciously took up his Godly duty of lordship over her and the household; this enabled her to love him fully, in the same way as the Church loves Christ.

Such a rehabilitation of Aboriginal masculinity through Pentecostalism resembles the situation of a Navajo (or Dine) Pentecostal, Andrew, who stated: "I was tested by wine but I didn't return to drinking… That is how the Lord has given my manhood back to me" (quoted in Garrity 2000:534). Andrew's utterance allows us to consider Pentecostal practice as a potential locus of power and control over one's temporal and spiritual affairs, which may be articulated as *manhood*.

I suggest that Andrew's emphasis on right manhood closely resembles the emotional testimony of a young man in the isolated communities. After speaking of his life of substance abuse, of beating and cheating on his spouse, he stated, in terms that suggest being dominated: "When I was out in the world, I was working hard for the Devil," and, "The Devil was whipping me. He used me like a riding horse." Of course, the potential analytical utility of such discursive emphasis on gaining power and self-control through conversion is not limited to men.

John Garrity emphasizes, above all other factors, the cultural importance of an "ethos of power in Navajo healing" (*ibid*; *cf.* Goulet 1998, Ridington 1988) to explain the rise of Pentecostalism among the Dine, suggesting a strong cultural congruence between Pentecostalism and Dine/Dene religions. This emphasis on power and control closely resembles Richard Preston's earlier thought-provoking approach, focusing on temporal power and competence (in both white and Cree terms, and in both the sacred and secular spheres) as benefits accruing to Pentecostals (Preston 1975a:122-123; *cf.*

Pelkmans *et al* 2005). Thus, emphasis on power and authority may be one element capable of drawing men's interest, as well as having a broader cultural relevance.

Returning to demographics, I have identified a number of challenges facing Johnny's church. Throughout the region, church leaders cannot rely on stable sustaining attendance and financial support among those community residents who may identify themselves with Pentecostalism in a more general sense. Thus, church leaders and "strong" church members actively attempt to interest, recruit, and convert among the non-Pentecostal minority on an ongoing basis. They must also maintain visiting or counseling relationships with "*hot and cold*" (as Edward Noskiye called them) nominal Pentecostals, who do not attend church regularly.

When I would ask him about a given individual's religious status, Peter Thunder would often say, "They're still Catholic," or, "They're not saved yet." This suggests a teleological idea of conversion, which holds that most everyone should be converted eventually (or imminently) given the obvious power of God's message. In this view, Christ's return will be more a day of rejoicing than of judgment. As I suggested in chapters three and five, over the long term and on a collective scale, religious affiliation and attendance wax and wane rather than moving clearly in one direction. Secondly, many individuals also waver or backslide (as John A. Cardinal suggested, this even applies to pastors and evangelists). During and after my main fieldwork, multiple individuals who had been evangelists or members of the pastorate "went back to the world" to some extent. This also applies to other congregants, albeit less visibly.

One man summed up his family's (and the community's) religious trajectory as follows:

> It used to be that everyone in Trout Lake was Catholic. Still there's people who will tell you that the Catholic religion is the only religion God put on this earth.. (shrugs) Well, I've read the bible too (shrugs).. My family all went Pentecostal, then we drifted off, but… (shrugs)

This man's final shrug, in the context of the total narrative, confirmed to me the frequency and (as my interlocutor saw it) inevitability of backsliding or "drifting off."

One sign that one is not (or is no longer) a fervent Pentecostal is drinking alcohol. While many people give up drinking when they become Pentecostals, others may have an initial conversion but thereafter remain chronic alcoholics (and/or binge drinkers) and rarely attend church. As multiple community and church members told me, support from the church for those who drink chronically is limited; while on a drunk one is effectively cast out of Pentecostal society. This is due both to pastors' reluctance to associate with such people and due to Pentecostals' belief in the need for faith and spiritual intercession to heal alcoholism. This puts pressure on the would-be convert not only to succeed, but to avoid using non-church based resources, some of which involve traditional healing (Woodward 1990). This paragraph is not intended to imply that all those who do not attend church are alcoholics. Many community members who feel attached to Pentecostalism do not attend church for a wide range of personal reasons, particularly reasons relating to work or subsistence harvesting.

Even among the pastorate and church board members, subsistence harvesting duties cut into church attendance. In a possible attempt to shore up attendance among core congregants (many of whom are very active in subsistence activities), Johnny sometimes gives sermons urging people to rest on Sunday and not hunt. He did this on one occasion by using a narrative of a hunting mishap on a Sunday (summary translation: Peter Thunder); this type of narrative was often told by priests during the pre-settlement era, and more than one elder mentioned similar tales from the past.

Some people who do not attend church regularly, but who consider themselves Pentecostals, indicated they avoid attending because they feel shame about their ongoing "sinning," which they did not consider consistent with church attendance. Specific behaviours deemed as sinful include use of alcohol, solvents, illegal drugs, tobacco, or (according to some) prescription medication. There are those who do not wish to give up some of these substances. Some others said they weren't "ready" to come to church or didn't "know" enough. This exemplifies one major feature of conversion-oriented doctrine: it creates two classes of people: the saved and the unsaved. Many community members appear to see going to church (signifying purity or knowledge) as something they hope to do in the future, at the end of their religious journey, not at the beginning. This may indicate a Cree approach, recognizing the knowledge and competence required for religious practice, as well as the presumptuousness and danger of jumping in without "knowing something." In any case, revivals and tent meetings occasionally swell the ranks of regular churchgoers with members of this "hot and cold" group of nominal Pentecostals, and also with curious onlookers and hangers-on.

Apart from regular church events and informal visiting, church leaders may reach the unchurched through special performances (including speeches, prayers, sermons, and/or music) at various public events including the following: land claim and political meetings, community dinners, wakes, and funerals. This is done to attract new members, maintain faltering ones, and do good works. In spite of overall cooperation, there is some evidence of rivalry and jealousy within the pastorate of the region, possibly relating to the increasing appearance (in spite of their repeated assertions to the contrary) that they are shepherding a diminishing number of followers, in a changing community. Nevertheless, Pentecostal ritual continues to be a regular and focal practice for a significant minority of the regional population, as well as an occasional feature of social or religious life for nearly all other area residents (*e.g.*, at funerals).

How to praise the Lord in Cree

Finding and demonstrating ecstasy and power through worship is the central ritual strategy of the Pentecostal pastorate. Their goal is to continually renew and revive their membership through discourse, so as to save both their community and the world. In this manner, the "temple" itself becomes a centre for enacting the correct relationship of God and World (Geertz 1983:121-146) through verbal art and embodied experience.

Trout Lake Pentecostals believe that God sings and talks through them in an inspirational manner, and they thus perform God's will in the world: "Without your mouth, God doesn't have a mouth," an utterance I transcribed in church, is an emblematic statement of this belief. Performing becomes a way of drawing strength and inspiration through orality. As Peter Thunder said at the end of a short sermon, "When you're up here, when you've got that anointing, you don't have to react, you just speak. I don't want to get off" (*i.e.*, off the stage). This utterance hints at the ecstasy many adherents strive to feel in worship. Such sentiments are manifested in practice through an allegedly unstructured approach to worship in which any congregation members may come forward to testify, prophesy, pray, sing, or seek healing, at any time.

Much of the feeling sought by congregants is wrapped up in discourse, including bible verses, songs, and testimonies. Some also quote other Men of God from elsewhere:

"I heard a preacher say once…" To discursively shape and describe their religious practice, many speakers use resources from such cotexts within their own utterances. As Shoaps points out, entextualization of prior utterances is a crucial site to examine the conscious use of tropes, metaphors, and borrowed ideas. For Pentecostals, entextualization entails differentiating dry, ritualistic, use of secondary sources, from a fresh, "earnest" (Shoaps 2002), reading, which fosters or reflects a personal experience.

Entextualization is also related to "intermodal overlap" (Feld, quoted in Samuels 2004:17), which occurs when someone begins to speak while music is still playing. In this manner, a singer might shout (as Emile is wont to do) "A-MEN!" just as they are striking the last chords of a hymn on the guitar. Similarly, tag lines from hymns are often repeated and interpreted following the end of a song, such as "*I'm tired of dead religion and cold denomination*." Tag lines, intermodal overlap, and entextualization each buy the performer time to think, by giving ready access to tropes. Tropes may then lead to a more personal discussion, relating the text to individual context. Entextualization thus enables one skilled to seamlessly build a bridge in performance between canonical writings or hymns, and personal speech.

Entextualization strategies often include code-switching, as well as personal commentary on the text. Assistant Pastor Peter Thunder might conclude a bible reading (in English) by switching to Cree: "wâcistakâc" ('that's wonderful'), or, "tâpwe mâka cî" ('now isn't that true'). A still more common entextualization strategy is to conclude a bible reading with a statement thanking Jesus for his word (which could be uttered in Cree, English, or both). For believers, the Word of God becomes a physical staple, as well as a textual resource. Indulging oneself by reading God's word is compared to eating. For instance, one is hungry to hear the Word of God. While worshipping, believers say they experience a physical and emotional sensation comparable to drinking a good glass of wine. Wine is a multivocalic symbol connoting both the coming of the spirit chronicled in Acts and the old life of alcoholism, which many congregants struggle to leave behind. So a single utterance I transcribed in church ("I'm drinking this wine and I'm going to enjoy it!") might include entextualizing references to many different cotexts, including bible verses and implied personal narratives of redemption.

Still others ensure "earnestness" of textual performance by avoiding entextualization and spontaneously making up new songs of praise, in an improvisational setting, backed by the church's amateur pick-up band. Mrs. Christine Noskiye (aged over 80) frequently sang in this way. Even singers who work within an existing repertoire are open to new inspiration in their performances. One woman, while giving me permission to record her next singing performance in church, told me she did not know what songs she would sing and would not know until the beginning of the performance. She said that God would make the choice for her.

Media in Cree and English, such as 15-minute radio messages, special telecasts, and print literature were an important source of growth in postwar northern Evangelical missions, as described in Chapter Three. More recently, with the advent of widespread satellite TV and internet in the communities, conventional North American televangelists broadcast their message locally. These evangelists have had a great impact on social life in North America generally (Harding 2000), and they have also played an important role locally in the isolated communities.

On at least three occasions, people I visited were watching a televangelist program. Emile and Peter each told me they get some ideas for sermons and songs from televangelists. One woman claimed to watch such programs nearly all the time, while another man warned in his testimony that watching such programs was no substitute for personal spiritual growth: through singing, prayer, and reflection. Other Christian mass media, such as signs (see Figure 24), websites, printed tracts and posters, biblical t-shirts, and gospel recordings (including Cree recordings by northern Alberta artists) are also in use locally. Country gospel songs, such as those appearing in the Coen Brothers' feature film, *O Brother, Where Art Thou,* were very popular during my fieldwork.

In some cases, performers self-consciously transcend the boundaries of genre through making statements such as: "I'm singing this song as a prayer *anohc* ('today')." Such remarks reveal a folk taxonomy of genres and words with power. It is now appropriate for me to analyze more closely some of these genres.

Figure 26: Emile Houle

Music is key to performing and experiencing Christianity. Most community members recognize tone, genre, and function of music as some of the key differences between Pentecostalism and its antecedents. The importance of music in Pentecostal ritual draws on, but also transcends, the integral relationship of (country) music to "*feeling*" (Fox 2004), or affect, in broader North American society. At Faith in God's Temple, songs powerfully connote distinctive (yet overlapping) in-group identities, such as Cree, "country," modern, and/or Pentecostal. Songs, whether sung in English or Cree, have the potential to recall in their feeling tones other singers and other places. Subjectively, singing such songs (though they may have no overt connection to Aboriginality) allows the performer to enact and emote particular kinds of local (Aboriginal) identity.[121] Regardless of its provenance, music can grow local meanings. Music appears as a way to access the real or the spiritual, becoming a site for the re-creation of culture and society. That is why people love to play church music. Indeed, playing church music at home can teach family members the tunes and the register of Pentecostalism, perhaps bringing them to church in the future.

There is a widespread belief in the community that the "the bible says you have to have music in church." Accordingly, services always begin with a hymn-sing coordinated informally by one or two assistant pastors and (if available) one or more backing musicians. Strategically, the hymn-sing allows people to fill the church slowly rather than arriving at a fixed time, and also projects an air of contemplation and concentration while remaining relatively informal and anonymous. The early stages of the hymn-sing may involve informal visiting between the stage performers and the first few audience members; however, as more people come in the focus turns more fully to music and worship.

---

[121] For a discussion of hymns as part of Indian identity, see Lassiter 2001, McNally 2000, Philips Valentine 1995, Preston 1985, Whidden 1985; for the function of music other than hymns in formulating Indian identity see Lassiter 1998, Preston 1985, Samuels 2004.

Musical performance is a key skill for leaders to develop, which is notably open to women. One local woman grew up in a "strong" family of testifiers, singers, and players. To my ear, she is the best drummer and best all-round musician (also singing well and accompanying herself competently on electric guitar, acoustic guitar, or keyboard) currently active in the Trout/Peerless church music scene. Her husband, a church board member, plays bass competently in a no-frills, yet somewhat improvisatory, manner. He learned bass in order to enjoy making religious music with his wife. As the rhythm section, this couple is the core of a loose church pickup band ("jam" might be a better term than "band") with variable membership and instrumentation, no other members of which ever rehearse together except while performing in church. Many times I have seen this couple walk in to church while a hymn-sing was underway, then move to the stage, and sit down at their instruments. Within seconds they would be tuned, plugged-in, and playing. They instantly tightened up all the other players and singers, causing the audience to begin swaying and foot-tapping. At the end of the first song, the bassist and drummer would often stand up, smile at each other, then at the other musicians, and remove their winter coats. Their presence, week in and week out, demonstrates the commitment and artfulness people bring to create church feeling.

Although dance as such is not a major feature of local worship, nevertheless movement to and through music is a very important means of preparing oneself for surrender to God. A short prayer, inviting God to "take over the service", often accompanies the end of the hymn-sing, marking the beginning of the service proper. At this time, Emile or Peter tells congregants to "begin to worship Jesus." Often, glossolalia or improvisational praising speech is heard at these times, while the music becomes a hypnotic background chorus.

Following this worshipful period, Peter might say "pe'nâskomaw Jesus Christ" ('Come and praise Jesus Christ'). This signifies that the main part of the service is beginning: the mic is opened to those who wish to testify and/or sing. At such times, usually the oldest people present will speak first, generally beginning with a man. While some people speak for several minutes, many other simply come up to bear greetings or sing a tune or two. Sometimes the same song is sung by two different people, a few minutes apart, as people come and go throughout the service. This is fine so long as one's approach to the song is "earnest" and sincere. In this way, singing continues to be a model of worshipful behaviour throughout the service, even after the close of the initial section or hymn-sing that is wholly devoted to musical worship.

Music is an embodied phenomenon. In the context of a small wooden building containing several amplified instruments and enthusiastic singers, one feels the music reverberating through head and body. My wife and son attended one service with me late in my fieldwork, but left almost immediately because of the volume. Often one can feel the floor vibrate at moments of special intensity in the service, when stomping and dancing occur. Singers choose tunes, which are rarely announced, and begin singing in (or out of) the key of their choosing, as musicians begin to jam on one of the hundreds of songs in their repertoire. These include songs from individual pastors' and congregants' memories, as well as from their collections of songbooks and sheet music. One popular hymnbook is *Cree Hymns*, published by the Northern Canada Evangelical Mission.

Sometimes, audience members shout out requests, sing, or shake a tambourine from the crowd. Routinely throughout a service, many audience members cross the divide between viewer and performer, leading songs as part of a testimony, or on their own. Audience members are expected to participate in many ways, and are reminded by speakers of their collective power through faithful prayer. This resembles Jeff Titon's pastor consultant's characterization of the worshipful church as a "powerhouse for God" (quoting book title. 1988).

At moments when the Holy Spirit is felt to be active in the room – notably during healing and anointings – songs are sung repetitively to maintain ritual intensity and invoke key symbols.[122] At some such times, the sensation is one of a wall of sound – music, singing, shouting, praying, tongues, crying – which is sometimes subtly managed or looped by the music leaders and/or pastors, so as to facilitate altered states of consciousness, slipping into a sacred place or time. So the many songs sung, old and new, English and Cree, are yet another set of genres which are active both on the physical and psychological levels, and which play a key role in communicating both to the listening subject and to the divine.

God is felt to play an important role in leading the service. Recall that, at the beginning of a service, the pastor often prays that God will take over: "We commend the service into your hands, O God." Numerous persons, male and female, pastors and lay people, told me that when they testified or sang in church, God was in charge of what was said. The ultimate manifestation of this phenomenon of having one's speech taken by the spirit is that of glossolalia or tongues. This form of speech appears most likely to occur during anointings.

---

[122] I also observed this musical strategy employed at a funeral, by a man who repeatedly sang a short section of a song, called "Flowers for the Master's Bouquet," as family members sorrowfully viewed the deceased.

Figure 27: An Anointing

The anointing is the major sacrament, which appears to have subsumed some of the roles of baptism (also a form of anointing) and communion, as well as having elements of a healing or purification rite.[123] In this rite, church leaders oil their hands with common kitchen oil[124] (a bottle of olive oil is visible in the foreground of Figure 26) and place their hands on a person or object. The intent is physical, spiritual, or psychological healing through "that anointing power." The anointing power is said to be the core feature of the service, and draws people to the service.

---

[123] I did not witness a communion/holy meal ceremony or a life cycle-oriented sacrament such as a wedding, baptism, or confirmation during my fieldwork in Pentecostal churches. Possibly such sacraments are more associated by locals with the OMI (as I argued in Chapter Three with support from Fr. Paul Hernou's writings and other archival data), or perhaps pastors simply lack the legal authority to carry out some of these ceremonies.

[124] Prayerfully and earnestly laying on hands without oil could also have the same effect.

The anointing is based on rites occurring both in Greek and Hebrew scriptures. Significant figures such as Jesus and his ancestor, David, are anointed in the bible, creating an association with kingship and power. Indeed, the word "Messiah" (*i.e.,* 'Christ' [from the Greek]) is from the Hebrew for 'anointed.' Roman Catholicism has also included anointing with oil as an element in some rites, including extreme unction. In spite of this pedigree, anointing is uncommon in mainstream (Euro-) North American Protestantism; however, Lanita Jacobs-Huey (2006:52-53) provides substantial data on a group of urban African American Christians' ("Cosmetologists for Christ") use of anointing. As Jacobs-Huey reports, and as I have observed, one can anoint either a person or an "inanimate" object. Prayed-over objects, such as clothing, may thus also gain the potential to heal (in accordance with Cree linguistic/cultural principles where clothes could be considered animate or agentive under certain circumstances). Anointing provides a means for the power of God to enter a physical entity, such as a person's body, through the collective intersession of leading congregants.

Healing may be primarily physical, primarily symbolic, or have strong elements of both. As one young man stated, "Sin is like a cancer in the body; we have a doctor in Jesus." Similarly, William Auger commented, "I decided to start seeing a new doctor. His name's Jesus Christ." This suggests the potential for both sinful disease and sacred ecstasy to be considered either as spiritual or embodied states, both subject to healing.

A person may request an anointing: either publicly in front of the church, or privately beforehand. Most often, it seemed to me that only the principals knew when an anointing was about to occur. The presiding pastor would simply gesture to one or two elders, and respected senior church members, to approach the front. At this time, the subject of the anointing would also approach the front (if not already there testifying). On occasion, people referred to physical infirmities as the target of the anointing. Other times it appeared they were seeking a spiritual, psychological, or emotional balm.

With three or four church leaders laying oiled hands to the subject and holding them up or down while singing and praying reached a crescendo all around, subjects often collapsed or began to cry.[125] On numerous occasions, two or more anointings occurred concurrently; this often removed any distinction between audience and performers, as the majority of congregants stood in front participating in some manner. The same affect can also be realized through music alone, as many participants move at the front of the sanctuary.

The sensation of losing oneself in the music or the worship is also symbolically comparable to an anointing. At such times especially, God is felt to be nearby. One is living in "sacred time" (Hall 1983): a deeply meaningful, memorable, state, resembling leisure or play (Robbins 2004a:126, Stuckenberger 2005, Whitehouse 2004:64).

Aside from music, testimonial narratives are another key discourse unit evident in worship. Testimonies are edifying excerpts from the speaker's life story, presented to "lift up" other congregants and to enact a coherent identity for the speaker (Lawless 1988:33, Linde 1993). At Faith in God's Temple, an elder's story or counseling narrative may also demonstrate generic characteristics of a Pentecostal testimony. The following utterance, an introduction to a narrative by elder Solomon Noskiye, demonstrates key strategies in setting up testimonial speech:

> ninanâskomâw manito nimiyweyihten anohc kisemanito kâpimâcihit kîspin ekâ ohci kisemanito namoya wîkâc ôta nikânîpawin neyistaw ohci kâkîsikâk eyinito-

---

[125] A similar response is also seen in the sweatlodge.

> ayisînîwiyân ekînâtôkwâtisiyân mâka kîkway ohci kôpasikweyân kîya ohci ekîsekisiyân
>
> awa nitôsim kâpîkiskweyân nîswâw nîya omisi nikîhitôten ewako kâwîwihtamâtahkok mâka tâpwetamowin nikikisken etâpwetamân omisi tehispayik nitawât piko
>
> nân'taw peyak
> (Transcribed by Dorothy Thunder; edited by Clint Westman)
>
> ***
>
> [applause] 'I thank God! I'm happy I'm here today. It's God that gives me life. If not for God I wouldn't be here. I'm standing up on this day, just an ordinary person. I got into everything. But the reason I came up here was for you all. I was afraid.
>
> It's this one, my nephew, that I'm talking about. It's the second time I've experienced this. What I am telling you all about is faith. I wear it. I believe it because I experienced it like that.
>
> OK (I'll tell) about one thing…'
> (Translated by Clint Westman and Dorothy Thunder).

This utterance began the open-mike segment of a service one evening, directly following a short bilingual monologue by Assistant Pastor Edward Noskiye, who had led the hymn-sing that night. Solomon went on to tell a two-and-a-half minute narrative about how the congregation had helped heal both his nephew and his grandchild through their intercessory prayer and the blessing of objects.

The conclusion of Solomon's narrative re-emphasizes the role of God and the congregation in the healings, including a rhetorical attempt to diminish the prestige of Solomon himself. This is an important discourse strategy for both Crees and Christians:

> namoya nîya kîkway ekaskîtâyân mâka wîya manito tâpwetamowin tâpwetamowin ehâpahtahk kîspin ekâ etâpwetamân namoya wîkât takînîpawiyân anohc kâkîsikâk ôta kîspin namoya manito etâpwetawak ekosi nitakahkeyihten
> (Transcribed by Dorothy Thunder; edited by Clint Westman)
>
> ***

> 'Me, I don't have the power, but him, God, believing, faith, it is there to be used. If I didn't believe I would never be standing here today, on this day, if not for God. I believe in it (holds up bible) so I'm pleased about it' [applause]. (Translated by Clint Westman and Dorothy Thunder).

The next speaker was Solomon's wife, Annie, who praised God's power and mercy, shouting as she did so.

I take it as significant that Solomon begins and ends by proclaiming, but delineating, his own knowledge and power as through faith and the bible. Augustin Auger, in a very different narrative that he shared with Roy Yellowknee in 1968 (1990), provides an example suggesting similar reluctance to claim personal power/knowledge. Auger begins his narrative with the statement, "I really didn't see too much in my life, but I have seen a lot of hardship since I have been around" (quoted in Yellowknee 1990:54). In relation to this opening, see Solomon's "I'm standing up on this day, just an ordinary person. I got into everything." Such prefaces serve to establish credibility, in Auger's case as an authentic bush person, in Solomon's as a sinner converted. Auger then immediately begins to address his narrative's main topic: a 1907 mission tour on which he guided a priest. At the conclusion of his narrative, he states: "If I could speak better, I would say more" (*ibid*:58). Again, see Solomon's conclusion: "Me, I don't have the power." The modest narrator does not praise his/her knowledge or discursive skill, and attributes the source of each.

Louie Cardinal uses a similar rhetorical strategy discourse (discussed in Chapter Four), in which he is careful to attribute the sources of his knowledge and power in a more traditional Cree context, that of learning from his grandfather (translated by Andrew Orr):

> Introduction:
> His grandfather had mentioned how people used to live way back. They usually never wore any clothes just a cover, that they used to wear.
>
> ***
>
> Conclusion:
> He said that one of the things that he's really been thinking about a lot is that way back when I was young he said his grandfather was old and grandfather had taught him that. To prophesy and some of the things that grandfather had been telling me about his life, to be passed on way past then. Grandfather said: But for you there's going to be a different religion coming, and that's where a lot of divisions will happen. Those, all those things, how Grandfather said, I've *seen all* those things, he said. I've been thinking about it a lot because Grandfather had told me what was going to be and what to expect, he said.

Louie's statements that he learned to prophesy from his grandfather, and learned oral history from his grandfather, are functionally equivalent to Solomon's saying that God is the reason for his presence on stage, the reason for his healing power. This careful delineation of personal knowledge and power, seen in all three accounts, is a hallmark of Cree narrative style (*cf.* Darnell 1991:100; Darnell 1974:324,335).

As Louie's and Augustin's examples demonstrate, I suggest that the framing of Solomon's story closely also resembles other Cree elders' healing and counseling narratives (*cf.* Ahenakew *et al* 2000, Kâ-Nîpitêhtêw *et al* 1998, Minde *et al* 1997, Whitecalf *et al* 1993), as much as it resembles generic Christian testimonies. Such "metanarrative" frames point to other utterances and generic signposts, allowing for listeners to understand by means of analogy and cotext (Philips Valentine 1996).

A story can be simultaneously an elder's narrative and a Christian's testimony. Some young people from other communities travel to worship at Trout Lake specifically to hear the wisdom of "wise elders." Thus the multi-generic constitution of such elders' stories is likely to enhance, rather than detract from, their meaning to most listeners in multiple speech communities.

Intergeneric narratives are one communicative modality that Bambi Schieffelin's analogy between language shift and religious shift (quoted in Robbins 2007:28) appears to illuminate considerably, as does Jean-Guy Goulet's (1998:193) contention that, "when the drum and the rosary meet," sacred vessels from differing traditions can be used in tandem, remaining sacred without apparent contradiction or conspicuousness. Since genre is a form (or vessel), a speaker's use of elements from a traditional verbal art genre does not imply that *content* of the story is also traditional (Philips, Lisa. Personal Communication. March 30, 2007). In turning from form to content, one sees salient in each tradition tales concerning "both sides of medicine" (Ahenekew 2000), that is, contact with good and evil supernatural entities causing illness or healing. Indeed, there appears to be a strong correspondence between Aboriginal and Pentecostal healing ideologies. In these discourses and practices, symbolic elements of Cree tradition (such as healing and narrative genre) are incorporated selectively within an overall framework that remains consciously Christian (Preston, Richard. Personal Communication. May 7, 2007).

Prayer is, naturally, an important genre of church discourse for Cree Pentecostals. While prayer could refer to a wide range of discursive units that involve talking to God, in some cases prayer is more marked and discrete. As an example of a marked prayer, I present the following utterance by Joe Trindle. Joe is a Trout Lake resident who is not formally involved in church leadership, but is a frequent singer and testifier, as well as a grader operator, hunter, trapper, horseman, husband, and father.

On this occasion Joe was called up by Peter Thunder, saying, "astam ('come here') Joe." Peter had been singing and playing some tunes, and asked Joe for a formal opening prayer. Joe obliged. At approximately two minutes long, his prayer allows for efficient presentation and discussion of numerous features in Cree Pentecostal verbal art:

> Hâw nôhtâwînân kihci mîna kinanâskomitinân manito kâtipeyihcikeyan
> manito owîhowin kîya pehtâkosiwin kâmiyâk kâtipeyihcikeyan kâpehtâkosiyan
> kîya
> mîna piko kâmiyâk kanitaweyihtamâhk kîkway kîya manito kiwîhowin kâmiyâk
> kâtipeyihcikeyan kîya manito kâtipeyihcikeyan tapehtamâhk manitowin
> tapehtamâhk ita enitawi ayât
> keyâpic kâpapâmipimohteyâhk kâtipeyihciket ôta askiy manito kinanâskomitinân
> kîya
> kâtipeyihcikeyan kapihtokepayik ôma nistikwânihak iskweyâc nitehinâhk metoni
> kinanâskomitin kâtipeyihcikeyan ekosi mâka manito otina nicihciy
> kâtipeyihcikeyan
> ewako mîna kâpîkiskwâtikoyâhk kâtipeyihcikeyan manito, manito iyisîyin
> kâkîhotinamâsoyan kâtipeyihcikeyan semâk
> kâtipeyihcikeyan emîcisoyahk ki
> ekosi manito kinanâskomitinân Jesus Christ kîya manito kikisewâtisiwiniyik
> kâtipeyihcikeyan kîya ekota mîna ôta wayawâtimihk kâtipeyihcikeyan mîna ôhi
> meskanawak kâtipeyihcikeyan ekanaweyihtaman askiy nanâtaw
> kâtipeyihcikeyan
> manito kiwîhowinihk ohci kâmaskawisîyan manito tawîcihiyâhk tâp'we emîyâk
> kapimâtisiwin
> emiyâk kîsikâw kiwîhowinihk ohci Jesus Christ manito ôta kiwîcihitinân
> Amen
> *Thank you Lord. Thank you Jesus.* (Transcribed by Dorothy Thunder; edited by
> Clint Westman)
>
> ***
>
> 'Oh, Our Father we honor and respect you Lord God.
> God, you gave us the right to speak, you Lord, it is your word I hear.
> God, it is your word I cherish and it is written that we follow what you tell us.
> Lord God that is the word we hear oh Lord, I now know where you are.
> You told me, Lord, to spread your word all over this land oh God I honor you.
> Lord thank you for coming into my mind to help me understand.
> I love you oh Lord and in God's word you are my savior.
> And also when you speak, Lord God, you told me to take what you say right
> away.
> Oh Lord, you gave us a lot, and God we honor you Jesus Christ you are a
> merciful god.

You are master and creator of everything, oh Lord.
Oh you are keeping our land and roads safe for us oh Lord.
God through your strong name is how we fulfill what we have, our life.
Through your name we gain life through Jesus Christ God we will help.
Amen
Thank you Lord. Thank you Jesus'
(Translated by Ray G. Thunderchild and Clint Westman):

This prayer exemplifies many polysemic tendencies in Cree religious discourse. Note the relatively free variation between a number of terms for God, such as the following: "nôhtâwînân" ('Our Father'); "manito" ('God'); "kâtepeyiciket" ('The Lord'); "kîya" ('You'); and "Jesus Christ." Each of these terms is or was also deployed in Anglican, CMA, and Roman Catholic Cree worship, as well as among traditionalists. This may affect feeling tone for many participants who remember these other traditions.

Given the different meanings of each word across traditions, careful translation is required to ensure the terms reflect local meanings. One example is the potential for misunderstandings created by Ray G. Thunderchild's suggested translation of 'Creator' for "kâtipeyihcikeyan" (see Chapter Four). The term "Creator" is not commonly used by Trout Lake Pentecostals, and is seen as a sign of neo-traditional affiliation.

Joe's prayer also shows examples of a number of terms in common use to describe attributes of God (all definitions from Wolfart and Ahenekew 1998):

nanâskom: to be grateful to s.o.
kisewâtisi: to be full of grace or mercy
maskawisî: to be strong

I find it significant that each of these terms is also in use among Catholic and traditionalist worshippers, as my other fieldwork in ritual contexts attests.

Sometimes people say surprising things about God that appear to invoke strong images from Cree culture and spirituality. In the case of "kâmaskawisîyan manito"

(‘God, it is you who are strong’ or ‘You are a spirit which is strong’), while using a standard word for strength, Joe is also literally stating that God has the strength or attributes of the Bear (‘*maskwa*’). This is interesting as bears have been honoured through spiritual practice since time immemorial among the Cree. Bears are not only a key signifier of the power of traditional spirituality, but also symbolized the indigenization of Christ’s sacrifice in Fr. Vandersteene’s art and theology (Waugh 1996:189-90; 224-5). As such, congregants’ usage of *maskawisî* is widespread and relatively unmarked locally, but is striking to the language learner and to the scholar of symbols.

The Bear concept appears to mediate between a number of different religious traditions. As Waugh writes of Cree responses to the Bear symbol in the Christian era: “Like the power of the cross, the bear had the ability to leap cultural solidarities and unite people on a larger level” (1996:225). The power and harmony of bear and cross imagery in Cree ritual tradition, across sectarian boundaries, is exemplified by Dwight’s (a ceremonialist from a nearby community) drum, which is painted with both the bear and the cross. This polysemy of images is also referenced in Joe’s usage of “kâmaskawisîyan manito” within Pentecostal ritual.

Another term used by Joe repeatedly, *nanâskom*, indicating thankfulness, can also be used to indicate appreciation or praise (translation: Peter Thunder; Ray G. Thunderchild). As such, Cree Pentecostals use it relatively freely to say both ‘Thank the Lord’ and “Praise the Lord.’ Many utterances start or end with “’nâskomaw Jesus tonight;” “’nâskomaw Jesus for his word;” “’nâskomaw Jesus nîsta” (‘I also thank Jesus’); or “’nâskomaw manito opîkiskwewin” (‘Thank God for his word’). The latter two utterances allow for recognition of previous speakers or readers, and for entextualization of their comments or readings into the current speaker's own testimony.[126]

Key topics of church discourse, here evident in Joe's prayer, are the majesty of God's word, and the power of the word to change lives. Such emphasis on the power of the word, and experience of *feeling* the word in one's body or in one's mouth, is seen in many other testimonies I recorded or observed. Thus, people thank God for this word that they experience.

The main purpose of Joe's prayer is to speak from his heart, on behalf of the congregation, to praise and thank God. This purpose relates both to earthly and heavenly ends. As such, God is thanked for keeping the land and roads safe. Bush and road safety are important considerations as many deaths are caused by accidents. Indeed, road safety is also a key political concern of church and community leaders. One factor contributing to unsafe roads is resource development and the continued presence of heavy resource extraction equipment on public roads not designed for that purpose. However, one can also read into this a concern with alcoholism: alcohol is a contributing factor in many "accidents" on the road, as well as "accidents" and violence in and around the community. In this way, social concerns enter into ritual speech.

A mighty Man of God

Social and even global issues are frequently discussed (albeit sometimes obliquely) in church. Examples from transcribed discourses include mention of drugs

---

[126] As one might infer from reading Joe's prayer in Cree, use of "'nâskomaw!" is so widespread in servces (by both stage performers and audience members) that a visiting Evangelist named Clarence Dill, a non-Cree, began to code-mix by using "'nâskomaw!" in his English sermon, to the great delight of the congregation.

(“you get hooked the first time you use it”), poverty (“mommy we don’t have any groceries”), bereavement (“so much pain for the family”), and land claims politics (“a disaster”). Also, visiting pastors (one might call them traveling evangelists, though at least one preferred the term “prophet”), in particular, frequently raise social issues global in scale.

The two visiting pastors I saw speak each raised Christian/Islamic relations, not generally a major topic of local discussion, as well as their support for the State of Israel. One visiting pastor from Calgary, “Clarence Dill” exclaimed that Islam was the fastest growing religion not only in the world but also in North America, and that Christians should be wary of its growth. This theme was picked up by a local person who asked rhetorically in his testimony, “Why do Afghanistan People hate Israel?” References to Israel reflect the symbolic importance of the State of Israel in the millenarian theology of many North American Christians (Swatos 2005), and show how local congregations have been symbolically drawn into a global spiritual war.

Another visiting pastor had an altar call and gratuitously praised the State of Israel at a funeral. In calling the unsaved, grieving, audience members to the altar (unsuccessfully), the presiding visiting pastor implied his belief that the deceased, who was the object of the funeral, had likely gone to Hell as unsaved; but that the living could still be saved. So again we see pastoral discourse tacking back and forth between the individual and social scales, with the fall of the one used as an example to save the collectivity. By contrast, the deceased’s grandfather (a Cree Pentecostal elder), and other extended family members, spoke at the funeral about personal hardship caused by early and sudden losses of so many of their kin, year after year. That is to say, their commentary remained more focused on the local and personal than the global or theocratic.

Clarence Dill is a black man, who was born in the Caribbean and lived in Ontario before establishing a "prophetic" ministry in Alberta. Currently, Dill has active ministries of prophetic healing in Trinidad, Sudan, and among the Sudanese community in Calgary. Yet, it was in the isolated communities where Dill's ministry began. He bought his first tent with the money he raised[127] by preaching in the isolated communities during the eighties, he said. Now, everywhere he goes around the world, he tells people about the "powerful meetings" at Loon, Trout, Wabasca, Whitefish, and Cadotte. This utterance, and similar reported comments from other outside evangelists, supports local people's view that their meetings are "more emotional" than those of non-Aboriginal churches. Through such representations, local people are placed as exemplars in global Christian communion, "lifting up" church members who see their local ritual life as having such global salience.

Church members then were asked to donate money to support Dill's mission in Sudan, based on the fact that Trout Lakers were enjoying Canada's high standard of living. In another example, Dill healed a diabetic woman by laying hands on her and then proceeded to give her some dietary advice. "Your table," he said, "should be like a garden: green, red, orange, yellow." That is, one must eat vegetables and fruits of all these colours to stay healthy, something that is difficult if not impossible in Trout. Other healings attempted by Dill that night seemed to require him to reassure subjects that they actually had been healed, forcefully reminding one man to leave his cane at the front.

---

[127] From my observations in church and discussions with local people, local pastors scarcely ever pass a collection plate during services (generally relying on a more private approach to soliciting funds); visiting pastors usually do take a collection and exhort local people to support their ministry generously.

The next time I saw this old man, going down the road alone, he still appeared to be walking with difficulty and pain. On the night of this man's attempted healing in Trout Lake, Dill himself was moved to tears when he spoke in an eloquent way of his own triumphant Caribbean healing services, where he had healed so many people his arms became tired.

In the same sermon, the prophet paid respects to one old church leader, an original Pentecostal evangelist to the community. Dill honoured this old evangelist by calling him "a mighty Man of God," and stating, "God doesn't forget us when we're sick." The prophet was referring to a serious stroke that the old evangelist had experienced prior to the start of my research, confining him to a wheelchair for many months. Around the same time as his stroke, the old evangelist's heart was broken by the alcohol-related accidental death of a pre-school aged granddaughter. During this time of profound sorrow, others within the family also suffered from serious illness. In light of the entire trauma, I do not know whether the old evangelist felt, like Job, that God had forgotten him. Whenever we spoke together, the old evangelist was reticent about his spiritual life, for a preacher. He did comment once, at a public gathering, what a blessing it was to watch young people grow up. No doubt his late granddaughter was on his mind when he uttered those words. As the old evangelist knew too well, many in his community are unable to partake in this "blessing," of seeing their children become adults.

For those who survive childhood relatively unscathed by poverty, abuse, ill health, or accident, there may await malevolent beings, such as a spirit of alcoholism (that voice in one's head that says, "nothing else to do, might as well drink…") and the

"Suicide Spirit." Like the Windigo (*cf.* Waldram 2004) of other narratives, each of these mythical entities struggles today against the people's survival, to wrack the community and scar those who remain. So, as they have always done, some of the people gather together to pray, sing, counsel each other, and seek assistance from powerful men and women.

The Suicide Spirit alit one night close to the church, even as a service was underway there, when a young man in a nearby home reached out to a bottle of pills. Given the comings and goings prevalent throughout services, the proximity of the afflicted house, and the arrival of the ambulance from Peerless, the spirit's attack soon became known to congregants, and was the focus of prayerful intercession in the church. A second young man, who before finding God had once shot a hole through his own belly while drunk and under the Suicide Spirit's influence,[128] was called upon to lead the prayer.[129] This survivor, an upcoming figure in local church life, beseeched God to triumph over the Suicide Spirit by physically expelling the pills from the subject's stomach, to cast out the entity holding the suicidal man in "chains," nearby.

In this case, the suicide attempt was not successful. In other instances, the poor (to non-) availability of emergency, counseling, and mental health services helps to give the Suicide Spirit the upper hand. As such, this moment was an important one for me in gaining understanding of the relationship of ritual, trauma, healing, salvation, and politics. Working against a socio-political backdrop of considerable pain, isolation, and uncertainty, working against spirits of both Cree and Christian provenance, Trout Lake Pentecostals strive to create a ritual space where the individual and the collectivity may be transformed and healed through performance of the sacred (*cf.* Ferrara 2004, Garrity 2000:537).

---

[128] A central element of this man's life story is that demons (including the Suicide Spirit) have set him apart for special attention in order to weaken a prominent member of his extended family as a Man of God. This resembles in many respects the healing narrative of Solomon Noskiye (Chapter Five), who was attacked by witchcraft meant for his father, André, a traditional ceremonialist.

[129] The one who called him to do so (and who also continued to participate in the prayer) had recently lost a son to suicide, another topic that was the focus of subsequent church discourse for this man, for a limited period following the death.

Conclusion: "Farther Along"

In this thesis, I have documented the types of religious discourse most salient in the isolated communities, and the historical and social contexts in which these discourses occur. Although my research questions are field-inspired, they are not limited to local relevance. Rather, I have attempted to make contributions on several levels: 1) by adding to the literature in the "poorly understood" (Lewis 1982:20; *cf.* Smith 1981) field of northern Alberta ethnology; 2) by presenting, integrating and translating historical documents of interest to local people and relevant to the academy; 3) by recording, identifying, theorizing, translating, and contextualizing examples of Northern Cree verbal art; 4) by contributing a study of Cree Pentecostal conversion, propagation, and ritual practice to the growing global literature on Anthropology of Christianity. While each of these covers a set of specific research contributions, overall the four goals I have laid out above have potential to contribute understanding to one another. Certainly, conversion, congregational growth, and religious experience are complex phenomena. Today's generation of Pentecostal leaders in the region might attest to this, as they face significant challenges in maintaining the gains of earlier missionaries, but who labour cheerfully all the same. "It's hard work running a church," As one pastor told me during my 2008 follow-up visit.

To paraphrase E. P. Thompson, Cree Pentecostals were present at their own making. That is, local people promulgated, adopted, and (in many cases) developed a unique body of doctrines and practices to allow them to meet changing needs, in accordance with some traditional approaches to spiritual and personal power. Pentecostalism has expanded rapidly in the isolated communities over the last 40 to 45 years, to reach a level of adherence far exceeding that seen in the broader Canadian society, or even among Aboriginal people nationally or regionally. Factors in the local rise of Pentecostalism include the following: isolation and dependence of the region; general condescension and ineffectiveness of prior (Catholic/Anglican) missionaries; superior numbers, resources, and (as I argue) strategic brilliance of the first Evangelical/ Pentecostal missionaries; beachheads provided to Pentecostals by prior Evangelical missionizing in the region that created advancement opportunities for Aboriginal leaders; discontentment with established religious traditions across many strata of Cree society; traumatic impact of rapid change, sedentarization, and industrialization; personal choice or contingency; family networks; as well as an affinity (and/or, inversely, an opposition) of Pentecostalism with several elements of Cree culture, including spiritual practice and language ideology. I both borrow from and critique the work of prior analysts who focus on just one or two of these factors. I also provide interpretations on language use in Church, for religious purposes, that have the potential to enhance understanding of language maintenance in general, and in Canada in particular, as it occurred for some First Nations languages, and for the Cree language specifically. I suggest that the use of Cree in church is strategic, and compensates for lack of linguistic capital in other contexts.

In setting out a well-documented historical account of Evangelical-Pentecostal conversion in one district, I have provided baseline information for future studies of evangelization in other native communities. I have also connected this local movement both to national organizations and independent actors. Further to this, one avenue for future research that I will mention here is my proposed post-doctoral research program, funded by SSHRC for 2008-2010, at l'Université de Montréal. Post-doctoral research will build on the local findings explored here through archival study of PAOC, U of A (Kent-Drever Collections), and other resources (including internet, television and other media, and secondary ethnographic data), to trace a national history of Pentecostalism among Canadian Aboriginal peoples. I will also consider and theorize anthropologists' (I argue) demonstrable neglect of, and distaste for, this religion. This study will contribute to enhancing scholarly knowledge not only of Pentecostalism, but also of history and theory within Canadianist anthropology.

Returning to the local scale of the present study, I would like to suggest that further research on Aboriginal Pentecostalisms in other local settings may find results somewhat different from my own. In particular, the rejection of trappings from Indian culture, which I have described and Dombrowski has theorized, may not be the *sine qua non* of Aboriginal Pentecostalism, after all. For example, the Calgary Native Pentecostal Church, led by Pastor Dean Shingoose and affiliated with the PAOC, encourages the use of dance, drumming, pow-wow regalia, and other Aboriginal symbols.[130] This suggests that some urban/southern congregations may have quite different attitudes towards Indian culture. Furthermore, in the north itself, Richard Preston (in press) and Earle Waugh (1996:235) report some Cree Pentecostals occasionally using forms such as the sweat lodge and the round pow-wow drum in Christian worship, although such practices remain divisive and uncommon.

What about the 'why' of conversion? I am drawn to models of cultural change (Voloshinov 1973:17-18, *cf.* Boas 1932) that emphasize people's freedom and creativity in living artfully against the backdrop of economic life, which enables cultural life but does not predict its forms. As such, I have been resistant to analyses that see Pentecostal conversion mainly as a predetermined response to economic change. Nevertheless, in studying a marginalized community surrounded by wealth (some of which is generated by despoiling the territory of the marginalized community), one must be attentive to economic, cultural, and social instability, and to the potential role of instability in conditioning or enabling radical social movements such as Pentecostalism. It appears in general that local people have developed a tradition of religious practice that is both ethnic and exclusive, while also linked to a broader national and global community (*cf.* Pelkmans *et al* 2005). I suggest that this polyvalence enables individuals alternatively (or simultaneously) to use their religion as a boundary and as a portal between cultures.

---

[130] See: Making Connections: Aboriginal People in Canada. The Presbyterian Church in Canada, Toronto. http://www.presbyterian.ca/healing/docs /MakingConnections AboriginalPeoples doc. Accessed November 23, 2005.

While my discussion is politically oriented, and while church leaders have always been involved in politics, in my experience Pentecostals do not see their movement as primarily political. Certainly local church leaders have not embraced radical strategies, to the extent of other Cree Pentecostal leaders such as Matthew Coon Come and Billy Diamond, or even (to use the example of a local, traditionalist, politician) Lubicon Chief Bernard Ominayak. Furthermore, where Pentecostal leaders have sought, through sermons or electioneering, to comment on public issues, they do not always speak with one voice. One issue on which local leaders disagree is the proposed land claim settlement the most important political issue facing Trout and Peerless. One individual supported the land claim in his capacity as political leader while appearing to speak against it as materialistic in his capacity as a church leader.

Another Pentecostal community leader told me he supported the land claim and wanted new houses for all, but especially for those who would "look after them" (*i.e.,* not drink chronically). Thus, Pentecostals may bifurcate the community through political discourse: that drinking and "accidents" are mainly personal problems to be addressed spiritually, not mainly social problems to be addressed through political means. Other church leaders feel that increasing justice and prosperity in the region (through the proposed land claim settlement) will have a negative effect on people's spirituality. However, as I have attempted to show, a more textured consideration of local politics suggests that it is premature to assume that Pentecostals oppose land claims and Aboriginal rights.

The country gospel song "Farther Along" (best known through recorded versions by Dolly Parton and by the Flying Burrito Brothers) may exemplify the attitude local Christians hold about economics, life, and death (at least in the abstract). Many different congregants sang this song during my fieldwork:

> Tempted and tried, we're oft made to wonder
> Why it should be thus all day long
> While there are others living about us
> Never molested though in the wrong
>
> When death has come and taken our loved ones
> It leaves our home so lonely and drear
> Then do we wonder why others prosper
> Living so wicked year after year
>
> Farther along we'll know all about it
> Farther along we'll understand why
> Cheer up my brother, live in the sunshine
> We'll understand it all, by and by
>
> Faithful 'til death, said our loving Master
> A few more days to labor and wait

Toils of the road will then seem as nothing
As we sweep through the beautiful gates

(J.R. Baxter and W.B. Stevens. 1937)

"Farther Along" was sung by a Mr. Austin Miller at the funeral of my grandfather, Cornelius Westman (a Saskatchewan farmer-socialist), in 1966, demonstrating the hymn's popularity and longevity within Evangelical/Pentecostal circles.

This hymn, together with other popular testimony tunes, appears to almost single-handedly revitalize the case supporting a strict Marxist analytical framework for the study of religion, emphasizing the false consciousness of religious adherents; however this would be a mistranslation (*cf.* Brodwin 2003). One could also (mis-) translate such songs as relatively passive expressions of either Cree or Christian discourses focusing on the afterlife, the acquisition of sacred knowledge, and/or religious life as a path or "walk."[131] Above all, subjectively, "Farther Along" expresses beautifully the hope, resentment, and simmering anger of people living in a marginalized community. Some of the singers of such songs brought tears to my eyes; this was especially the case while I was sitting in my Tory Building office, listening on headphones to my late (as I had just found out) friend William Houle's guitar playing like no one else.

To conclude, I recall that Martin Okemow told me a story in which a hunter saw four horses gallop out of the depths of God's Lake to its surface, then "they dived again." Other Cree narrators describe the appearance of underwater panthers, which can carry people away, and of powerful men who may choose to spend the winter beneath the ice, "dreaming all the bottom of the water" (Brightman 2002). Emile Houle may have been indirectly referring to this oral tradition in a sermon, when he described Catholics and traditionalists as "swimming in that river of forgetfulness." For Cree Pentecostals, this forgetfulness is opposed to the order of God, who, as Peter Thunder said, "knew us all." Jack Okemow underlined the importance of remembrance when he beseeched God, during a sermon: " Don't forget Peerless!"

---

[131] On the discursive and educational character of the walk in Algonquian lifeworlds, see Akan 1992.

To conclude, I will use Emile's and Jack's utterances to suggest that "forgetfulness" has been a major theme in the relations of the study region's dwellers with the outside world. Traders and governments censused the bush dwellers and then forgot them (or, at best, gave them a pension, welfare, poor housing, and/or $5.00 treaty annuities). Fr. Vandersteene sought to invent a Cree Catholicism, but forgot that his forebears had already branded the Cree "religion" as one of fear, causing shame and fright to many in the communities. Subsequent Evangelical/Pentecostal missionaries forgot that the Cree had already known Christianity for decades, and were already known by God even before then. More recently, some neo-traditionalist advocates have forgotten that these Cree Pentecostals are still Indians: even if they "don't need no dream catchers" (to quote Jack Okemow's indictment of neo-traditionalism, which equated "culture" with these window ornaments). For their part, many local Pentecostals have forgotten essential elements of their movement's history, from which they might learn.

For the last sixty years, most Albertans (certainly those in power to make decisions over land claims, natural resources, and the environment) also appear to have forgotten about some of the isolated communities of the Lesser Slave Lake Interior, which are in the way of making money and have never fit into a box called "Indian" or "Métis." Since the 1970s, the many well-intentioned political activists (in Canada and internationally) who have turned their attention to the region have overwhelmingly focused on the celebrated "last stand" (Goddard 1991) of Clarence Jaycox's "new tribe of Indians:" the Lubicon Lake Cree Nation. These activists support the Lubicon through letter-writing, targeted boycotts, and direct action. Such "Friends of the Lubicon" (as they call themselves) or "Lubicon-lovers" (as they are called elsewhere in the communities) have too often forgotten to extend the olive branch to kinfolk down the road from Little Buffalo (and even to non-Lubicon members living in Little Buffalo), or to push for a generalized resolution of Aboriginal issues in Alberta. Meanwhile, for years, governments delayed other land claim settlements and froze Aboriginal economic development projects in the region, in hopes of settling the high-profile Lubicon claim. Each of these forgetful oversights has had negative consequences for the political and social development of neighbouring communities, and Pentecostals have taken some of the blame for the generally slow pace of land claims settlements in the region.

From a social science perspective, Pentecostalism may be translated as a response to the negative consequences, social and personal stresses, caused by all this forgetfulness on the part of outsiders. Unfortunately, and perhaps surprisingly, many anthropologists and other analysts have also forgotten to accommodate Cree Pentecostals (such as those in the isolated communities) in their own worldview: instead they pronounce this anomaly as negative or pathological (or ignore it altogether). This is a forgetful (in the sense that it neglects core insights of anthropology) mistranslation. By conducting critical research on Trout Lake's fairly diverse Pentecostal majority, perhaps I may broaden academic and social services discourse, and thereby contribute to local quality of life in some small way over the long term.

Figure 28: Community Camp near Trout Lake, August, 2006

Figure 29: Community Camp near Peerless Lake, August, 2006

Bibliography

Abu-Lughod, L.
1991 Writing Against Culture. *In* Recapturing Anthropology: Working in the Present. R. Fox., ed. Pp. 137-62. Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research Press.

Ahenakew, Alice, Freda Ahenakew, and H.C. Wolfart.
2000 Âh-âyîtaw isi ê-kî-kiskêyihtahkik maskihkiy = They knew both sides of medicine : Cree tales of curing and cursing. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press.

Akan, Linda
1992 Pimosatamowin Sikaw Kakeequaywin: Walking and talking--a Saulteaux elder's view of native education. Canadian Journal of Native Education 23.1:16-40.

Amoss, Pamela
1978 Symbolic Substitution in the Indian Shaker Church. Ethnohistory 25.3:225-249.

Anonymous
n.d. La Conquête et Défense des Ames. Draft manuscript. Trout Lake file. Catholic Archdiocese of Grouard-McLennan.

Anonymous
n.d. Annales de la Mission St. Martin du Wabaska 1891-1941. Unpublished manuscript. Edmonton: PAA.

Anderson-McLean, Maire
1999 The Landscape of Identity: *man'to sâkahikan* or Lac Ste-Anne. Religious Studies and Theology 18.2:5-32.

Asch, Michael
1988 Kinship and the drum dance in a northern Dene community. Edmonton: Boreal Institute for Northern Studies.

Bailey, Sue. 2008. Census offers detailed snapshot of Aboriginals. The Globe and Mail. January 13, 2008 (online version: accessed January 13, 2008).

Bakker, Peter, and Universiteit van Amsterdam.
1997 A language of our own - the genesis of Michif : the mixed Cree-French language of the Canadian Métis.

Balmer, Randall
2006 Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory: A Journey into the Evangelical Subculture in America. Toronto: Oxford.

Bauman, Richard

1983 Let your words be few : symbolism of speaking and silence among seventeenth-century Quakers. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press.

Bauman, Richard, and Charles Briggs

2003 Voices of modernity : language ideologies and the politics of inequality. Cambridge, England ; New York: Cambridge University Press.

Bauman, Richard, and Joel Sherzer

1974 Introduction. *In* Explorations in the Ethnography of Speaking. Bauman, Richard Bauman and Joel Sherzer, eds. Pp. 6-14. USA: Cambridge University Press.

Beaucage, Pierre, and Deirdre Meintel

2007 Introduction: Social and Political Dimensions of Religious Conversion. Anthropologica 49(1):11-17.

Birdwell-Pheasant, Donna

1980 The Power of Pentecostalism in a Belizean Village. *In* Perspectives on Pentecostalism. S.D. Glazer, ed. Pp. 111-124. Washington, D. : University Press of America.

Boas, Franz

1932 The Aims of Anthropological Research. Science. 76:605-613.

Bourdieu, Pierre

1982 Ce que parler veut dire : l'économie des échanges linguistiques. Paris: Fayard.

Bousquet, Marie-Pierre

2007a Catholicisme, pentecôtisme et spiritualité traditionnelle: Les choix religieux contemporains chez les Algonquins du Québec. *In* Les systèmes religieux amérindiens et inuit: perspectives historiques et contemporaines. C. Gelinas and G. Teasdale, eds. Pp. 155-166. Québec et Paris: Muséologie In-Situ et L'Harmattan.

2007b A question of respect: Interpreting conversion to Catholicism among Algonquins. 39th Algonquian Conference, Toronto.

Brightman, Robert

2002 Grateful Prey: Rock Cree Human-Animal Relationships. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Brodwin, Paul

2003 Pentecostalism in translation: religion and the production of community in the Haitian diaspora. American Ethnologist 30(1):85-101.

Brown, Ian

2003 Aboriginal Health and Wellness. In Touch 26:1-10.

Bruckert, R.P.
1939 Mission du Wabaska. Unpublished manuscript.

Burkinshaw, Robert K.
2006 Native Pentecostalism in British Columbia. Canadian Pentecostal Symposium, Langley, BC. Trinity Western University.

Calliou, Brian
2004 Methodology for recording oral histories in the Aboriginal community. Native Studies Review 15(1):73-105.

Canada. Census Canada.
2001 Trout Lake/Peerless Lake aggregated census divisions. Ottawa: Census Canada.

Canada. Commission for Treaty No. 8
1900 Report of the Commissioner for Treaty No. 8. Ottawa: Department of Indian Affairs.

Candler, Craig
1999 Healing and Cultural Formation in a Bush Cree Community. MA, University of Alberta.

Cannell, Fenella, ed.
2006 The anthropology of Christianity. USA: Duke University Press.

Cannell, Fenella
2005 The Christianity of anthropology. Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute 11:335-356.

Cardinal, Harold, and Walter Hildebrand
2000 Treaty elders of Saskatchewan : our dream is that our peoples will one day be clearly recognized as nations. Calgary: University of Calgary Press.

Carlson, Nathan
2005 Reviving the Wihtikow: Cannibal Monsters in Northern Alberta Cree and Métis Cosmology. Honours, University of Alberta.

Choquette, Robert
1995 The Oblate assault on Canada's northwest. Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press.

Coleman, Simon

2006 When silence isn't golden : charismatic speech and the limits of literalism. *In* The limits of meaning : case studies in the anthropology of Christianity. M.E. Engelke, and Matt Tomlinson, eds. New York: Berghahn Books.

Cox, Harvey

1994 Fire from Heaven: the Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of Religion in the Twenty-First Century. USA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company.

Craik, Brian

1982 "The Animate in Cree Language and Ideology." Thirteenth Algonquian Conference, 1982, pp. 29-35. Carleton University: Ottawa.

Crampton, Colin

1990 A preliminary study of native land-use North of Lesser Slave Lake for the Bigstone Band. *In* Al-Pac EIA. A.-P.E.I.A.R. Board., ed.

Cree People of Peerless Lake, Alberta

1985 "And we need land:" A statement of grievances by the Cree People of Peerless Lake, Alberta. Peerless Lake.

Crowe, Keith J.

1991 A history of the original peoples of northern Canada. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Csordas, Thomas J.

1994 The Sacred Self: A Cultural Phenomenology of Charismatic Healing. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Dahlstrom, Amy

1995 Motivation vs. Predictability in Algonquian Gender. Twenty-Sixth Algonquian Conference, 1995, pp. 52-66. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press.

Darnell, Regna

2001 Translation. *In* Key Terms in Language and Culture. A. Duranti, ed. Oxford: Blackwell.

1991 Thirty-nine postulates of Plains Cree conversation, "power," and interaction: a culture-specific model. Algonquian Conference, 1991. Vol. 22, pp. 89-102.

1974 Correlates of Cree narrative performance. *In* Explorations in the Ethnography of Speaking. Richard Bauman and Joel Sherzer, eds. Pp. 315-336. London: Cambridge University Press.

Daveluy, Michelle, and Jenanne Ferguson

Under Review Scripted Urbanity in the Canadian North.

DeBernardi, Jean

2004 The Brethren Movement in the Straits Settlements of Colonial Malaya: Emplacing a Network Religion in a World in Motion. Social Science Research Council Conference on Transnational Religion, Migration and Diversity, Kuala Lumpur, 2004.

1999 Spiritual Warfare and Territorial Spirits: The Globalization and Localization of a "Practical Theology". Religious Studies and Theology 18(2):66-97.

Deegan, Mary Jo

1989 American Ritual Dramas: Social Rules and Cultural Meanings. New York: Greenwood Press.

Deiter-McArthur, Pat

1987 Dances of the northern plains. Edited by Stan Cuthand. Saskatoon: Saskatchewan Indian Cultural Centre : Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations.

Dilthey, Wilhelm, and H. P. Rickman

1976 Selected writings. Cambridge Eng. ; New York: Cambridge University Press.

Dombrowski, Kirk

2007 Subsistence Livelihood, Native Identity and Internal Differentiation in Southeast Alaska. Anthropologica 49(2):211-230.

2001 Against Culture: Development, Politics, and Religion in Indian Alaska. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

Dorais, Louis-Jacques

1997 Quaqtaq : modernity and identity in an Inuit community. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Douaud, Patrick C.

1982 Ethnolinguistic Trajectory of a Rural Metis Community. Doctoral, University of Alberta.

Douglas, Mary

2002 Purity and danger: an analysis of concepts of pollution and taboo. London and New York: Routledge.

Dunk, Thomas W.

2003 It's a working man's town : male working-class culture. Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Duranti, Alessandro

1997 Linguistic anthropology. Cambridge, U.K. ; New York: Cambridge University Press.

Edwards, O. C.

1999 On the north trail : the Treaty 8 diary of O.C. Edwards. Calgary: Alberta Records Publication Board.

Ekback, Donald H.
1977 I left my heart among the Cree. *In* Alliance Witness. Pp. 16-18, Vol. 112.

Engelke, Matthew Eric, and Matt Tomlinson, eds.
2006 The limits of meaning : case studies in the anthropology of Christianity. New York: Berghahn Books.

Favret-Saada, Jeanne
1977 Les mots, la mort, les sorts. s.l.: Gallimard.

Ferrara, Nadia
2004 Healing through Art: Ritualized Space and Cree Identity. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Feurer, Hanny
1993 Beyond Multilingual Education: The Cree of Waskaganish. Canadian Journal of Native Education 20(1):87-95.

Fidler, Peter, Bruce Haig, and Historical Research Centre (Lethbridge Alta.)
1991 A southern Alberta bicentennial : a look at Peter Fidler's journal, 1792-93 : journal of a journey over land from Buckingham House to the Rocky Mountains in 1792&3. Lethbridge, Alta: Historic Trails West Ltd.

Finnegan, Ruth H.
1992 Oral traditions and the verbal arts : a guide to research practices. London ; New York: Routledge.

Fishman, Joshua A.
2006 Do not leave your language alone : the hidden status agendas within corpus planning in language policy. Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Publishers.
1991 Reversing language shift : theoretical and empirical foundations of assistance to threatened languages. Philadelphia: Clevedon.

Fletcher, Christopher M. and Laurence Kirmayer.
1997 Spirit Work: Nunavimmiut Experiences of Affliction and Healing. Etudes Inuit Studies 21 (1-2):255-267

Foley, William A.
1997 Anthropological linguistics : an introduction. Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Foster, K. Neill
1971 In the frigid land of the Cree. Alliance Witness 106:9-10

Fox, Aaron A.

2004 Real country: music and language in working class culture. Durham: Duke University Press.

Friedrich, Paul

1986 The language parallax : linguistic relativism and poetic indeterminacy. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Frye, Northrop

1990 The great code : the Bible and literature. Toronto: Penguin Books.

1992 Words with power : being a second study of "the Bible and literature". Toronto: Penguin Books.

Garrard-Burnett, Virginia

1996 Resacralization of the Profane: Government, Religion and Ethnicity in Modern Guatemala. *In* Questioning the Secular State: The Worldwide Resurgence of Religion in Politics. D. Westerlund, ed. Pp. 96-116. New York: St. Martin's.

Garrity, John F.

2000 Jesus, Peyote, and the Holy People: Alcohol Abuse and the Ethos of Power in Navajo Healing. Medical Anthropology Quarterly 14(4):521-542.

Geertz, Clifford

1983 Local knowledge : further essays in interpretive anthropology. New York: Basic Books.

1968 Islam Observed: Religious Development in Morocco and Indonesia. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.

1960 The religion of Java. Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press.

Ghostkeeper, Elmer

1996 Spirit Gifting: The Concept of Spiritual Exchange. Calgary: Arctic Institute of North America.

Goddard, John

1991 The last stand of the Lubicon Cree. Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre.

Goddard, Ives

2002 Grammatical Gender in Algonquian. Thirty-third Algonquian Conference, pp. 195-231. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press.

1996 Introduction. *In* Languages. I. Goddard, ed. Handbook of North American Indians, Vol. 17. Washington: Smithsonian Institution.

Goffman, Erving

1974 Frame analysis: an essay on the organization of experience. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

1973 The presentation of self in everyday life. Woodstock, N.Y.: Overlook Press.

Goldlin, Liliana and Brent Metz
1991 An Expression of Cultural Change: Invisible Converts to Protestantism among Highland Guatemala Mayas. Ethnology 30(4):325-38.

Goldsmith, Claire, Betty Sewall, Ian Sewall and Clifford R. Ribbonleg, eds.
1987 The Grouse's Pouch Teacher's Guide (English Version). Fairview, AB: Fairview College.

Goulet, Jean-Guy
1998 Ways of knowing : experience, knowledge, and power among the Dene Tha. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

Graham, Laura R.
2006 Anthropologists are obligated to promote human rights and social justice. Anthropology News (October, 2006):4-5.

Grant, John Webster
1984 Moon of wintertime : missionaries and the Indians of Canada in encounter since 1534. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Gray, Susan Elaine
2006 "I will fear no evil" : Ojibwa-missionary encounters along the Berens River, 1875-1940. Calgary: University of Calgary Press.

Gregoret, Gene, and University of Alberta. Dept. of Anthropology.
1980 Narrative for the film, "The Trout Lake Cree". (MA Thesis)

Grouard, Emile
1923 Souvenirs de mes soixante ans d'Apostolat dans l'Athabaska-Mackenzie. Lyon: Oeuvre Apostolique de M.I.

Gumperz, John J., and Dell Hymes, eds.
1964 The ethnography of communication. Special Publication. American Anthropologist 66.6. Part 2.

Hall, Edward T.
1983 The Dance of Life: The Other Dimension of Time. New York: Doubleday/Anchor Books.

Hallowell, A. Irving
1955 Culture and experience. Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press.
1942 The role of conjuring in Saulteaux society. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania.

Harding, Susan Friend

2000 The book of Jerry Falwell : fundamentalist language and politics. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Harmon, Daniel Williams

1973 A journal of voyages and travels in the interior of North America. New York: AMS Press.

Huel, Raymond Joseph Armand

1996 Proclaiming the Gospel to the Indians and the Métis. Edmonton: University of Alberta Press/Western Canadian Publishers.

Hymes, Dell

1975 Breakthrough Into Performance. *In* Folklore: Performance and Communication. D. Ben-Amos and K.S. Goldstein, eds. The Hague and Paris: Mouton.

1974 Ways of Speaking. *In* Explorations in the Ethnography of Speaking. Richard Bauman and Joel Sherzer, eds. Pp. 433-451. USA: Cambridge University Press.

Innis, Harold A.

1999 The fur trade in Canada : an introduction to Canadian economic history. Toronto ; Buffalo: University of Toronto Press.

Jacobs, Adrian

1996 The Meeting of the Two Ways. *In* Native and Christian: Indigenous Voices on Religious Identity in the United States and Canada. J. Treat, ed. New York: Routledge.

Jacobs-Huey, Lanita

2006 From the kitchen to the parlor : language and becoming in African American women's hair care. Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press.

Joseph, Brian D.

1981 On the animate-inanimate distinction in Cree. Anthropological Linguistics. 21(7):351-354.

Kaa, Mo

1976 The logic of non-European linguistic categories. *In* Universalism versus Relativism in Language and Thought. R. Pinxten, ed. The Hague: Mouton.

Kâ-Nîpitêhtêw, Jim, Freda Ahenekew and H.C. Wolfart

1998 Ana kâ-pimwêwêhahk okakêskihkêmowina = The counselling speeches of Jim Kâ-Nîpitêhtêw. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press.

Kan, Sergei
2003 Against Culture: Development, Politics, and Religion in Indian Alaska (review). American Anthropologist 105(3):648-9.

Keane, Webb
2007 Christian Moderns: Freedom and Fetish in the Mission Encounter. Berkeley: University of California Press.
1997 Religious Language. Annual Review of Anthropology 26:47-71.

Kehoe, Alice Beck
1989 The ghost dance : ethnohistory and revitalization. New York: Holt Rinehart and Winston.

Kituskeenow, Bigstone Cree Nation and Métis Peoples of
1999 Cultural Land Use and Occupancy Study. Calgary: Arctic Institute of North America.

Krauss, Michael
1998 The Condition of Native North American Languages: The Need for Realistic Assessment and Action. International Journal of the Sociology of Language 132:9-21.

Laboucan, Rhonda, ed.
1995a acimohcik. *In* TLUOS archives. Cadotte Lake, AB.
1995b David D. Laboucan. Interview transcript. *In* TLUOS archives.

Lakoff, George
1987 Women, fire, and dangerous things : what categories reveal about the mind. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Lassiter, Luke Eric
2001 "From Here On, I Will be Praying to You": Indian Churches, Kiowa Hymns and Native American Christianity in Southwestern Oklahoma. Ethnomusicology 45(2):338-352.
1998 The Power of Kiowa Song: A Collaborative Ethnography. Tucson: University of Arizona Press.

Laugrand, Frédéric
2002 Mourir et renaître: La rèception du christianisme par les Inuit de l'Arctique de l'Est canadien. Quebec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval.

Laugrand, Frédéric, and Jarich Oosten
2007 Reconnecting People and Healing the Land: Inuit Pentecostal and Evangelical Movements in the Canadian Eastern Arctic. Numen 54:229-269.

Lawless, Elaine J.

1988 God's Peculiar People: Women's Voices & Folk Tradition in a Pentecostal Church. Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky.

LeClaire, Nancy, and George Cardinal.
1998 Alberta elders' Cree dictionary = Alperta ohci kehtehayak nehiyaw otwestamâkewasinahikan. Earle H. Waugh, ed. Edmonton, AB: University of Alberta Press.

Leonard, David
2000 Delayed frontier : the Peace River Country to 1909. Calgary: Detselig Enterprises.

Leonard, David, and Victoria Lemieux
1992 The lure of the Peace River Country : a fostered dream. Calgary: Detselig Enterprises.

Levasseur, Donat
1995 Les Oblates de Marie Immaculée dans l'Ouest et le Nord du Canada, 1845-1967 : esquisse historique. Edmonton: University of Alberta Press/Western Canadian Publishers.

Lewis, Henry T.
1982 A time for burning. Edmonton: Boreal Institute for Northern Studies.

L'Hirondelle, Lorna, Marjorie Memnook, Sally Warr and Donna Paskemin, eds.
2001 Plains Cree Grammar Guide and Glossary. Edmonton: University of Alberta.

Lightning, Walter
1992 Compassionate mind: implications of a text written by Elder Louis Sunchild. Canadian Journal of Native Education 19.1.

Linde, Charlotte
1993 Life stories : the creation of coherence. New York: Oxford University Press.

Llera Blanes, Ruy
2006 The atheist anthropologist: Believers and non-believers in anthropological fieldwork. Social Anthropology 14(2):223-234.

Long, John S., Richard Preston, and Cath Oberholzer
2006 Manitu Concepts of the Eastern James Bay Cree. 37th Algonquian Conference, Ottawa, 2006. Vol. 37, pp. 451-492. University of Manitoba.

Luhrmann, Tanya M.

2004 Metakinesis: How God Becomes Intimate in Contemporary US Christianity. American Anthropologist 106(3):85-101.

Mair, Charles
1999 Through the Mackenzie basin : an account of the signing of Treaty No. 8 and the scrip commission, 1899. Edmonton: University of Alberta Press.

Makokis, Leona
2001 Teachings from Cree elders : A grounded theory study of indigenous leadership.

Malinowski, Bronislaw
1935 Coral gardens and their magic. a study of the methods of tilling the soil and of agricultural rites in the Trobriand Islands. 2 vols. New York,: American Book Co.

Martin-Hill, Dawn
2008 The Lubicon Lake Nation: Indigenous Knowledge and Power. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

McGarvey, Gerald E.
1956 Buried in the bush. *In* Alliance Weekly. May 30, 1956. Pp. 5-6.

McNally, Michael D.
2000 Ojibwe Singers: Hymns, Grief and a Native Culture in Motion. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press.

Meili, Dianne
1991 Those who know : profiles of Alberta's native elders. Edmonton: NeWest Press.

Meintel, Deirdre
2007 When There Is No Conversion: Spiritualists and Personal Religious Change. Anthropologica 49(1):149-162.

Metcalf, Peter, and Richard Huntington
1991 Celebrations of death : the anthropology of mortuary ritual. Cambridge England ; New York: Cambridge University Press.

Metis Association of Alberta, ed.
1980 The Metis and the land in Alberta : Land Claims Research Project 1979-80. Edmonton: Metis Association of Alberta.
1979 Origins of the Alberta Metis : Land Claims Research Project 1978-79. Edmonton: Metis Association of Alberta.

Meyer, Birgit

1999 Translating the Devil : religion and modernity among the Ewe in Ghana. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press for the International African Institute London.

Meyer, David.
1975 Waterfowl in Cree ritual -- the Goose Dance. Canada. National Museum of Man, Ottawa. Ethnology Division. Paper 2(28):433-449.

Miller, Thomas William
1994 Canadian Pentecostals: A History of the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada. Mississauga: Full Gospel Publishing House.

Mills, Antonia
1986 The Meaningful Universe: Intersecting Forces in Beaver Indian Cosmology. Culture 6:81-91.

Minde, Emma, Freda Ahenakew, and H. Christopher Wolfart
1997 Kwayask ê-kî-pê-kiskinowâpahtihicik = Their example showed me the way : a Cree woman's life shaped by two cultures. Edmonton: University of Alberta Press.

Mol, Hans
1985 Faith and Fragility: Religion and Identity in Canada. Burlington: Trinity.

Moore, Patrick
1993 Native Dance in Northern Alberta. *In* The Uncovered Past. Patricia A. McCormack and R.G. Ironside, eds. Pp. 5-32. Circumpolar research series. Edmonton: Canadian Circumpolar Institute.

Morsch, J. Shirley
1983 Rejoice : a history of the Pentecostal Assemblies of Alberta and the Northwest Territories. Edmonton: Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada Alberta and the Northwest Territories (MacKenzie) District.

Mossière, Géraldine
2007 Emotional Dimensions of Conversion: An African Evangelical Congregation in Montreal. Anthropologica 49(1):113-124.

Nadasdy, Paul
2002 Against Culture: Development, Politics, and Religion in Indian Alaska (review). American Ethnologist 29(4):1027-1028.

Navarro, Carlos
2001 Pentecostal churches and their relationship to the Mexican state and political parties. Journal of ritual studies 15(1):55-66.

Nelson, George, Jennifer S. H. Brown, and Robert Brightman

1988 "The Orders of the Dreamed" : George Nelson on Cree and northern Ojibwa religion and myth, 1823. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press.

Nida, Eugene A.
1993 Language, Culture and Translating. Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press.

Nielsen, Amanda, and Native Counselling Services of Alberta.
1989 A review of the Talking Drum Youth Program in the communities of Wabasca/Desmarais, Loon Lake, Peerless Lake and Trout Lake. Edmonton, AB: Native Counselling Services of Alberta.

Niezen, Ronald
1997 Healing and conversion: medical evangelism in James Bay Cree society. Ethnohistory 44(3):463-491.

Norris, Mary Jane and Lorna Jantzen
2002 Generation to Generation: Survival and Maintenance of Aboriginal Languages within Families, Communities and Cities. Ottawa: Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development.

Noll, Mark A.
1992 A History of Christianity in Canada and the United States. Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans.

Noskey, Fred
1981 Fred Noskey. *In* Turning the Pages of Time. Nampa and District Historical Society, ed. Pp. 15-16. Nampa: Nampa and District Historical Society.

Palmer, Andie Diane N.
2005 Maps of experience : the anchoring of land to story in Secwepemc discourse. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Patrick, Donna
2003 Language, Politics and Social Interaction in an Inuit Community. Paris: Mouton de Gruyter.

Pelkmans, Mathijs, Virginie Vaté, and Christiane Falge.
2005 Christian conversion in a changing world: confronting issues of inequality, modernity, and morality. *In* Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology Report 2004-2005. J.O. Habeck, M. Heintz, J. Knorr, B. Mann, F. Pirie, and L. Yalcin-Heckmann, eds. Pp. 23-24. Halle/Salle: Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology.

Philips Valentine, Lisa

1996 Metanarration in Severn Ojibwe. *In* Studies in Honour of H.C. Wolfart. John D. Nichols and Arden C. Ogg, eds. Pp. 429-459, Vol. Memoir 13. Winnipeg: Algonquian and Iroquoian Linguistics.

1995 Making it their own : Severn Ojibwe communicative practices. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Portelli, Alessandro

1991 The death of Luigi Trastulli and other stories: Form and meaning in oral history. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Preston, Richard J.

1975a Belief in the context of rapid change: an Eastern Cree example. Carole E. Hill, ed. Pp. 117-129. Athens: Southern Anthropological Society.

1975b Cree narrative : expressing the personal meanings of events. Ottawa: National Museums of Canada.

1985 Transformations musicales et culturelles chez les Cris de l'Est. Recherches Amérindiennes au Québec XV(4):19-28.

In Press Twentieth Century Transformations of East Cree Spirituality and Autonomy. *In* Globalization, Autonomy and Indigenous Peoples, Mario Blaser, Ravi de Costa, Deborah McGregor and William D. Coleman, eds. Vancouver: UBC Press.

Reddekopp, G. Neil

1997 The Treaty Land Entitlement Claim of the Bigstone Cree Nation. Unpublished report: Alberta Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development.

1994 The Origin and History of the Cree Communities of Little Buffalo and Loon Lake, Alberta. Unpublished report: Alberta Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development.

Reynolds, Lindsay

1992 Rebirth : the redevelopment of the Christian and Missionary Alliance in Canada. Willowdale, ON: The Christian and Missionary Alliance in Canada.

1981 Footprints : the beginnings of the Christian and Missionary Alliance in Canada. Toronto: Christian and Missionary Alliance.

Ridington, Robin

1988 Knowledge, Power, and the Individual in Subarctic Hunting Societies. American Anthropologist 90.1:98-110.

1978 Swan People: A Study of the Dunne-Za Prophet Dance. Ottawa: Canadian Ethnology Service.

Robbins, Joel

2007 Continuity Thinking and the Problem of Christian Culture. Current Anthropology 48(1):5-38.

2004a The Globalization of Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity. Annual Review of Anthropology 33:117-43.

2004b Becoming sinners: Christianity and moral torment in a Papua New Guinea society. Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press.

2001 God is Nothing but Talk: Modernity, Language and Prayer in a Papua New Guinea Society. American Anthropologist 103(4):901-912.

Rubel, Paula G., and Abraham Rosman, eds.

2003 Translating cultures: perspectives on translation and anthropology. Oxford, UK ; New York: Berg.

Russell, Dale

1990 Eighteenth-Century Western Cree and their Neighbours. Hull: Canadian Museum of Civilization.

Sahlins, Marshall

1999 What is Anthropological Enlightenment? Some Lessons of the Twentieth Century. Annual Review of Anthropology 28:1-23.

Samuels, David W.

2006 Bible translation and medicine man talk: Missionaries, indexicality, and the "language expert" on the San Carlos Apache Reservation. Language in Society 35:529-557.

2004 Putting a Song on Top of It: Expression and Identity on the San Carlos Apache Reservation. Tucson: The University of Arizona Press.

Sanders, Gilda

1979 Some Selected Aspects of the Impact of the Churches on Metis Society and Economy, 1865-1905. *In* Origins of the Alberta Metis: Land Claims Research Project: 1978-9. Metis Association of Alberta, ed. Pp. 193-284.

Sapir, Edward

1921 Language : an introduction to the study of speech. New York: Harcourt Brace and company.

Sawchuk, Patricia and Jarvis Gray

1980 The Isolated Communities of Northern Alberta. *In* The Metis and the Land in Alberta : Land Claims Research Project: Part One: Papers on Metis land and history. Metis Association of Alberta, ed. Pp. 193-284.

Scollon, Ronald, and Suzanne B. K. Scollon

1979 Linguistic convergence : an ethnography of speaking at Fort Chipewyan, Alberta. New York: Academic Press.

Scott, Clive

2000 Translating Baudelaire. Exeter: University of Exeter Press.

Segal, Alan F.

2003 Text Translation as a Prelude for Soul Translation. *In* Translating cultures: Perspectives on translation and anthropology. Rubel, Paula, and Abraham Rosman, ed. Oxford & New York: Berg.

Shoaps, Robin A.
2002 "Pray Earnestly": The Textual Construction of Personal Involvement in Pentecostal Prayer and Song. Journal of Linguistic Anthropology 12(1):34-71.

Siggins, Maggie
2005 Bitter embrace : white society's assault on the Woodland Cree. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart.

Sinclair, Jeannette
1998 Lesser Slave Lake Aboriginal Oral History. MA Thesis, University of Alberta.

Smith, James G.E.
1981 Western Woods Cree. *In* Handbook of North American Indians. J. Helm, ed. Pp. 256-270, Vol. 6. Washington: Smithsonian.

Southcott, Chris
2008 Remarks in a Panel Discussion on Conversion and Community Cohesion. Heading North, Heading South: Arctic Social-Sciences Research in a Global Dialogue. March 8, 2008. Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology. Halle, Germany.

Speck, Frank Gouldsmith
1935 Naskapi, the savage hunters of the Labrador Peninsula. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.

Stephen, Cindy
2006 Neo-Pentecostalism embraced by Cree community: Anthropologist sheds light on evangelical syncretism. Christian Week 20.19 (December 15):3.

Stevenson, M.G.
1999 First Nations/Aboriginal Research Projects of the Sustainable Forest Management Network. Edmonton: Sustainable Forest Management Network.

Stevenson, Winona
1999-2000 Calling Badger and the Symbols of the Spirit Language: The Cree Origins of the Syllabic System. Oral History Forum 19-20:18-24.

Stewart, Charles, Joao De Pina-Cabral, Lale Yalcin-Heckmann, David N. Gellner and Bruce Kapferer
2001 Dossier: Secularism, Personal values and professional evaluations. Social Anthropology 9(3):323-344.

Stuckenberger, Anja Nicole

2005 Community at play : social and religious dynamics in the modern Inuit community of Qikiqtarjuaq = Een Samenleving in het Spel : sociale en religieuze Dynamiek in de moderne Inuit Gemeenschap van Qikiqtarjuaq. Amsterdam: Rozenberg.

Swatos, William H. Jr.

2005 Globalization Theory and Religious Fundamentalism. *In* Illuminating Social Life. P. Kivisto, ed. Thousand Oaks: Pine Forge.

Synan, Vinson

1997 The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition: Charismatic Movements in the Twentieth Century. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

Tanner, Adrian

in press The Nature of Quebec Cree Animist Practices and Beliefs. In La Nature des Esprits/Nature of Spirits. Laugrand, Fréderic B. and Jarich G. Oosten, eds. Quebec: Les Presses de L'Université Laval.

2004 The Cosmology of Nature: Cultural Divergence and the Metaphysics of Community Healing. *In* Figured Worlds: Ontological Obstacles to Intercultural Relations. John Clammer, Eric Schwimmer and Sylvie Poirier, eds. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

1979 Bringing home animals : religious ideology and mode of production of the Mistassini Cree hunters. New York: St. Martin's Press.

Taylor, Charles

1985a Philosophy and the human sciences. Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press.

1985b Human agency and language. Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press.

Tedlock, Dennis

1983 The spoken word and the work of interpretation. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Thompson, David

1993 David Thompson imagines the Great Plains. *In* Canadian Exploration Literature, An Anthology: 1660-1860. G. Warkentin, ed. Pp. 194-233. Toronto: Oxford University Press.

Thompson, David, and Victor G. Hopwood

1971 Travels in western North America, 1784-1812. Toronto: Macmillan of Canada.

Thompson, Edward Palmer

1982 The making of the English working class. UK & Canada: Penguin.

Thornton, Thomas F.
2005 Against Culture: Development, Politics and Religion in Indian Alaska (review). Ethnohistory 52(2):481-483.

Titon, Jeff Todd
1988 Powerhouse for God: Speech, chant and Song in an Appalachian Baptist church. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Tweed, Thomas A.
2006 Crossing and Dwelling: A Theory of Religion. Cambridge, USA: Harvard University Press.

Urion, Carl Armand, and University of Alberta. Dept. of Anthropology.
1978 Control of a topic in a bilingual (Cree-English) speech event.

Vaillancourt, Louis-Philippe, OMI
1982 De la catégorie du genre en Cris. Anthropologica 24:207-214.

Vandersteene, Roger, OMI
1960 Wabasca : dix ans de vie indienne (translated from Flemish by Jacques De Deken, O.M.I.). Gemmenich, Belgique: Editions O.M.I.

Vaté, Virginie
2008 Remarks in a Panel Discussion on Conversion and Community Cohesion. Heading North, Heading South: Arctic Social-Sciences Research in a Global Dialogue. March 8, 2008. Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology. Halle, Germany.

Voloshinov, V. N., Ladislav Matejka, and I. R. Titunik
1973 Marxism and the philosophy of language. New York,: Seminar Press.

Waldram, James B.
2004 Revenge of the windigo : the construction of the mind and mental health of North American Aboriginal peoples. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
1997 The way of the pipe : Aboriginal spirituality and symbolic healing in Canadian prisons. Peterborough, Ont.: Broadview Press.

Waugh, Earle H.
2001 Religious Issues in the Alberta Elders' Cree Dictionary. Numen: International Review for the History of Religions. 48(4):468-490.
1996 Dissonant worlds : Roger Vandersteene among the Cree. Waterloo, Ont.: Wilfrid Laurier University Press.

Webb, Stephen H.
1996 The Gifting God: A Trinitarian Ethics of Excess. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Weber-Pillwax, Cora, and University of Alberta. Dept. of Educational Policy Studies.
2003 Identity formation and consciousness with reference to Northern Alberta Cree and Metis indigenous peoples.

Wetherell, Donald Grant, and Irene Kmet.
2000 Alberta's north : a history, 1890 to 1950. Edmonton, AB: University of Alberta Press.

Whidden, Lynn
1985 Les hymnes, une anomalie parmi les chants traditionnels des Cris du nord. Recherches Amérindiennes au Québec 15(4):29-36.

White, C.D.
1918 Diocese of Athabasca: Archdeacon White's Itineration. St. John's Mission, Wabasca. *In* PAA. Acc. 83.75/4 File A.33/44 Box 95.

Whitecalf, Sarah, H.C. Wolfart, and Freda Ahenakew
1993 Kinêhiyâwiwininaw nêhiyawêwin = The Cree language is our identity : the La Ronge lectures of Sarah Whitecalf. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press.

Whitehouse, Harvey
2004 Modes of Religiosity: A Cognitive Theory of Religious Transmission. Toronto: Altamira.

Wolfart, H.C.
1996 Sketch of Cree, an Algonquian Language. *In* Languages. I. Goddard, ed. Handbook of North American Indians, Vol. 17. Washington: Smithsonian Institute.

Wolfart, H. C., and Freda Ahenakew
1998 The student's dictionary of literary Plains Cree : based on contemporary texts. Winnipeg, Man.: Algonquian and Iroquoian Linguistics.

Woodward, Rocky
1990 Peerless Lake church reaches out to the community. *In* Windspeaker. March 30, 1990.

Yellowknee, Roy
c. 1990 (1968) The Wabasca Tapes. Edmonton: PAA.

Yellowknee, Solomen
1976 Biographies of Eight Elders, Wabasca-Desmarais Area. PAA.

Young, David E., and Jean-Guy Goulet, eds.
1994 Being changed : the anthropology of extraordinary experience. Peterborough, Ont.: Broadview Press.

Young, David E., Grant Ingram, and Lise Swartz
1989 Cry of the eagle : encounters with a Cree healer. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Archives Consulted

Alberta Genealogical Society, Edmonton, AB
Catholic Archdiocese of Grouard-McLennan, McLennan, AB
Christian Missionary Alliance, Calgary, AB
Glenbow Museum, Calgary, AB
Hudson's Bay Company Archives, Winnipeg, MB (accessed remotely)
Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada, Toronto, ON
Provincial Archives of Alberta, Edmonton, AB
Société historique et généalogique de Smoky River, Donnelly, AB
University of Alberta Libraries Data Library
University of Alberta Libraries Special Collections: Kent-Drever Collections on Alternative Religions
Woodland Cree First Nation: Traditional Land Use and Occupancy Study Archives